OUT OF THE ASHES

the story of a survivor



by LEON THORNE

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By LEON THORNE, Ph.D.

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This book is dedicated, in deep humility, to those heroic martyrs who were destroyed in the European ghettos and concentration camps because they were Jews and because they lived Jewish lives. They died in obscurity and pain as the world looked passively on. May this book serve to remind mankind of what happened to them—and may they know, in Heaven, that they are remembered, their stories told, their experiences recalled and their heroism admired.



Author's Preface

Sixteen long and eventful years have now passed since the writer emerged from the shadow of death, with a lifetime of experiences etched in his mind, and a battered manuscript written under enormous handicaps and describing in detail the years of the Hitler terror.

Since that time there have been other survivors who have told their stories; there have been thousands of magazine articles and hundreds of books and plays and poems and true-life accounts ghost-written and distributed all over the world.

The story of Anne Frank has captured the imagination of the world. *The Wall* by John Hersey has been a Book-of-the-Month Club selection and it, like the Anne Frank book, has appeared in millions of copies of paperback editions everywhere. Meyer Levin, in his autobiography, *In Search* and in his best-selling novel *Eva*, has told, graphically, the stories of other survivors.

Why, then, another book by another man who happened to live through the war, through the concentration camps and through the harrowing crematoria?

No life is like another and no man has lived another man's life. I feel, with humility and with passion, that what happened to me was different in spirit if not in kind from what others lived through. No professional writer, no

skilled novelist, no gifted poet could lift the limits of his imagination to compete with the facts as they were.

The reader of this narrative may sometimes doubt the events recounted in this tale. But every word is the truth. And where I repeat some stories from hearsay, I have checked the manuscript with survivors in Europe who participated in those events of which I did not have first-hand knowledge.

I saw a generation die—and a new generation come to life. I emerged from the holocaust feeling that I came through, to some extent, because my story had to be told—to a doubting and to a forgetful and an indifferent generation. Men and women and children were wantonly murdered; and I saw it happen. The depths of degradation were witnessed by me and yet I retained my belief in the power of man to survive, to retain his faith in his Lord.

I shall never forget the years during which I existed; existed rather than lived. But I—like thousands of others—remain alive to give evidence of the barbarous treatment man can visit upon his fellow man.

I wrote this manuscript in German and, after years of travel and travail, saw it translated into English, for a new generation to read and ponder. It is obvious today, in reading of the swastika smearings in Germany and elsewhere that my story must be told. For after fifteen years, it is clear that Nazism is not dead. Young boys and girls, now studying in most schools are taught practically nothing about the Hitler years. Their ignorance of the atrocities is abysmal. And this ignorance is world-wide for people in all lands ignore the past and pretend a lack of knowledge of what happened in those years. The world has been shocked by violence against the Jews and Jew-baiting, renewed and revived a decade and a half after the victory over Hitlerism.

Indeed, a new generation must read and ponder this story. I can only wish that the eyes which read this narrative will help the world understand what happened to the people to whom these things were done—and the triumphant conclusion of this tale—triumphant even in the midst of terror and bloodshed. For I am persuaded that the Jewish people shall continue to dismay their enemies through the ages, even though some people continue to give evidence that they are still tainted with hatred and bigotry and violence.

The Jewish people are immortal and my own survival is part of that immortality, and the victory of God.

I am particularly grateful to the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, for its aid in the preparation of this manuscript. Mr. Mark Uveeler, Director of the Department of Cultural and Educational Reconstruction, and Mr. Leon Shapiro, Assistant Director, have been especially cooperative in making this project come into being.

I should like to take this ocasion to thank scores of friends who have been so helpful to me in my new life in the United States and who have thereby been of aid in making this book possible. Although there is no space here to list them all, I wish to single out Dr. Israel H. Levinthal of the Brooklyn Jewish Center and Dr. Harry Halpern of the East Midwood Jewish Center, who have been generous with their time and wisdom whenever I have required their understanding and experience in the ways of America.

I owe a special word of gratitude to my good friend, Dr. Benjamin Kreitman of the Brooklyn Jewish Center, who has taken an affectionate interest in my welfare and has been my faithful guide for many years. Without his friendship and support my life in this country would have been difficult. He has made it easier and I shall always be grateful to him.

I want to thank Harold U. Ribalow for lending the manuscript his editorial skill and understanding of the era through which I lived.

I cannot conclude my expressions of appreciation without paying special tribute to my dear wife Rachel, who is intimately acquainted with the events described in these pages and whose love and encouragement have meant much to me during the relatively peaceful years of adjustment in the United States.

And if the reader will gain some insight into the period, some realization of the hell and terror of the Hitler years, I shall consider my work well done.

New York, January, 1961 Leon Thorne



"X" marks the hiding place

From The Cellar

I am writing these lines under great difficulties, while my life is in danger and with little confidence that I shall survive these terrible years. But I must write, even if these words die with me, for I feel someone must tell the story of how the Jews lived, died—and survived the Hitler years. The despairing cries of my fellow Jews in the ghettos and concentration camps are echoing in my ears.

And their cries shall not go unheard. Will somebody be left to record recent events? Who will describe our tortures for the people of the future, who may be ignorant of what we experienced?

I dare not hope that I shall live through this period, but I must work as though my words *will* come through. I shall act and write as though there were hope for me . . . .

Five of us have been living in a cellar under a stable situated on the premises of an oil well in Schodnica in the Carpathian Mountains in Galicia. In the stable overhead there is a pig, a goat, and about twenty rabbits and some poultry. The cellar is six feet long and about four feet wide and about five feet high. We cannot stand upright, although we can lie down at full length.

I am here with my younger brother, and with Dr. Isidor Friedman, a young lawyer, and two women, Luisa Mahler and Esther Backenroth.

There isn't very much furniture here, but somehow we manage. We have two spring mattresses, a wooden bench, a narrow little table capable of holding no more than two saucepans at most and a small shelf. The spring mattresses are spaced a half-meter apart one from the other, with my brother and me sleeping on one and the two women on the other above us. Dr. Friedman uses the wooden bench for a bed. The floor and the walls of the cellar were constructed out of wooden planks.

For the moment, the only source of light we have is a candle, which burns day and night. Some day it might be possible for us to have electric lights installed by means of camouflaged wiring, but not yet. An airshaft built into the double wall of the stable provides us with our breathing air, but when it is hot outside, we get very little fresh air. In any case, it is becoming intolerably hot in our hideout. At night, the outside air is cooler and helps us breathe.

We have here the luxury of a makeshift toilet. In a corner of the cellar there is a niche, one yard wide, built in for toilet purposes, with a bucket in a box. This is what we all use, men and women alike.

Once every day, in the evening, of course, the well-camouflaged entrance to our hideout is opened for food for the next day, plus a pail of water. Each day there are potatoes, soup, some bread, and on Sunday, a little butter and a bit of sugar. We also receive tobacco, cigarette paper, matches and candles. In return we pass out the pots and pans used the previous day as well as the toilet bucket.

Thanks to two Polish families, we live as we do. Both Stanislaw Nendza and Franz Janiewski are oil workmen who formerly worked for us. Although Poles have been forbidden by the German authorities under penalty of death to aid Jews, these two Polish families have dared help us.

We are grateful to them, naturally, but it should be pointed out that they are not placing themselves in danger

for idealistic reasons alone. They are hiding some of their Jewish acquaintances and employers from the Gestapo for material reasons as well. First, we pay them very well for their cooperation and, in addition, we have promised them, in writing, that half our fortune in the Schodnica oil wells—which we are convinced will be restored to us after the war—will belong to them. The papers have been signed by us and are here in the cellar.

I am writing while lying on my cot, leaning on the bucket of water which is covered by a thick piece of cardboard. This is my desk. Under conditions that can hardly be called human, we are anxiously attempting to preserve our lives and our dignity. It is difficult here, but we are satisfied because up above, in the light and in the sun, where one can stand upright and breathe fresh air, brutal death awaits us. We understand that Jews are being killed systematically and callously, that none are left in the towns, and that even the labor camps have only a few thousand Jews left in them.

We are not at all confident that we shall be able to stay alive down here until the end of the war. A casual word spoken here, a word needlessly spoken too loudly might be heard by peasants or workmen passing by. A cough or a sneeze, any unforeseen incident, may bring us to death.

And so I am determined to see to it that these memoirs shall be seen and read. I will write them with objectivity and without embellishment. I will make my notes in copybooks and send each volume, including my notes made in ghettos and camps, by way of my hosts, to an Aryan friend of mine. Should I live to the end of the war, I plan to retrieve the books from him and arrange for their publication. And if I die, I shall arrange for him to send the copybooks to a Jewish organization in America or Palestine, with a postscript that the author had been shot.

And now, in the name of G—d, I begin to write.

Schodnica

No matter how hard you looked, you would have great difficulty in finding Schodnica on a map. It is buried in the Carpathian Mountains, fifteen kilometers distant from the closest railway station. It had a population of 5,000, of whom about 1,000 were Jewish. But Schodnica is obscure in history, for nothing of any historical significance ever took place there.

Years ago, there was what the Jews of Schodnica called a "revolution," even though this event was too trivial for any historian to record. As a matter of fact, the event under discussion did not really happen! It seems that an Austrian policeman (Galicia then belonged to Austria) had stabbed a non-Jewish loafer in a Jewish cafe and the gathering crowd got out of hand and threatened to storm and destroy the Jewish homes and their inhabitants. But nothing happened for an odd reason: a sudden and strong rain had come pouring down, rapidly drenching the excited natives and driving out of their minds any ideas of violence they had had before nature had decided to permit the rain to fall!

Because it was one of the few exciting moments in the

lives of the Jews, I heard it alluded to frequently during my childhood. Yet, although Schodnica was quiet, it was rather a substantial town. It was the first locality of Eastern Galicia where oil was discovered, more than one hundred years ago, and a Jew played a major role in this important discovery.

His name was Meilich Backenroth, my greatgrandfather. He was digging in his garden for a water well, when suddenly there spurted forth a dark brown, almost black liquid. But he himself was not aware of the value of his find. It was, of course, crude oil, and it was then used as cart grease and for lighting purposes, in a rather crude manner. It was not until a few decades later that Meilich's youngest son, Itzig Backenroth, realized the material significance of his father's discovery. He, is said, to have risked his life to get out of town to get to Vienna with his first bottle of petroleum. And it was that very year that hundreds of engineers came to Schodnica to drill for the liquid brown gold in the black earth. From that time forward, to 1939, the Backenroth family controlled a large part of the oil-boring places. The whole town came alive and, directly and indirectly, oil brought wealth to Schodnica. The Jewish community, while comparatively small, was rich in Jewish traditions, tolerated by the Christians, and permitted to enjoy life. Because the Jews were so aware of their tradition, it is natural that they sought information concerning their people and dreamed of a Zion Reborn.

The entire picture changed radically, violently and bitterly with the outbreak of the German-Polish war in September, 1939. Soviet troops occupied Lemberg, including Schodnica, as a part of East Poland, and almost immediately, all Jewish property was expropriated and the Jews were reduced to the status of beggars.

Two years later, on the thirteenth day after the outbreak

of the German Russian war, on Friday, July 4, 1941—the ninth day of Tammuz 5701 according to the Jewish calendar —a pogrom broke out in the area. The Russian troops had evacuated the sector five days earlier and Ukranians, infamous for the previous pogroms, assaulted Schodnica before the Nazi armies approached the town. The Ukrainians were responsible for murdering half of the Jewish men of Schodnica.

A few days later, the German Wehrmacht invaded the town with Slovakian troops and immediately issued the orders whereby:

1) Every Jew, including men between the ages of 12 and 60 and women between the ages of 18 and 40, were driven into forced labor, and

2) Every Jew, 10 years of age and over, had to wear a white badge, ten centimeters wide, embroidered with the Star of David, eight centimeters wide.

From this period on, the Jews were given dirty, miserable, humiliating work, cleaning sewers and gutters. There was no payment for this work, of course, nor was it physically hard. It was intended only to degrade and humble the Jews. Jews were permited a bread ration of 70 grams; non-Jews got 400 grams.

One month after the pogrom, the Gestapo entered the neighborhood village of Urycz, herded all its Jews into the nearby forest and murdered them all in cold blood, shooting them to death, needlessly, cruelly and thoughtlessly. The only survivor of this massacre was a boy between six and seven years old. His family name was Leichtmann and his father had emigrated to America a few years earlier. The father had sent immigration papers for his wife and two children, but they came too late. A week before they were to have left, the German-Polish war erupted. The mother and brother were killed with the rest of the Jews of Urycz, but the surviving lad managed to escape the Nazis, even

as the Germans persistently hunted the boy in the forest. The Gestapo officer in charge of the killings, a murderer named Monta, had sworn that he would see to it that no Jew in town remained alive. Yet the Leichtmann boy outwitted him, arriving in a terrible state, but safe, in Schodnica, where his uncle lived.

But Monta, a German by origin, who had lived in our region a few years ago, was not appeased by the bloodshed. He arranged for all the Jews of Podhorodce and Dolhe to be shot. It seemed that he had lost a lawsuit to a Jew, Pyrnitzer, at one time and his violent action was his idea of a private act of revenge against Jews. He spared the lives of two Jews—Katz and Weiss—who had been witnesses on his behalf during the trial. It was in this arbitrary, weird and meaningless fashion that Jews died, and lived.

When the shocking news of the massacres reached Schodnica, the large majority of the town's Jews panicked. There were rumors afoot that the Gestapo was coming to kill all Jews in the area. All of us, clutching our remaining possessions, fled to the nearby towns and villages of Borysław, Drohobycz, Sambor and Stryj.

My family and I ran to Sambor.

Sambor

Before the war, Sambor, a town in Eastern Galicia, had 21,000 inhabitants, of which one-third were Jewish. In Jewish religious circles, Sambor was famed as the home of the Rabbi Uri Yolles, the founder of the "Sambor Rabbinic Dynasty." His reputation drew hundreds of his followers to the town. During the time of the Baal-Shem-Tov, a great Talmudist lived there—Rabbi Yitzchok Charif. The Jews of Sambor were especially proud of both spiritual leaders and spokesmen as well as the entire "Sambor Dynasty."

The Nazi Gestapo, operating from the nearby town of Drohobycz, terrorized the Jews, who had been earning their livelihood as grain-dealers or craftsmen. (Two years earlier in 1939, when the Russians permitted the Germans to enter Sambor, the Jews were given four hours to pay the Germans 35,000 zlotys. They managed to obtain the money for otherwise, the entire Jewish Council would be shot.) Nevertheless Jewish life was rather well organized. In an area called the "Bleich," there was a Jewish Council which was a complex and bewildering unit. This Council was not created by the Jews themselves in order to represent their fellow Jews, nor were its members democratically elected. In an indirect way, this Council was appointed by the German military authorities. The newly-elected Mayor of a locality would propose to the military a Jew of his acquaintance as "Obmann" or foreman or chief. This Jew would then select his own colleagues to work with him.

Why was a Jewish Council established? What was its

task? Certainly, it did not represent the local Jews, nor did it heed their petitions. The Council had a single, unpleasant function—to find Jewish workers for the most difficult and dirtiest jobs in the area. All male Jews from the ages of 12 to 60 were eligible, all women, from 18 to 40. The Sambor Jewish Council was headed by a Dr. Samson Schneidscher. His deputy was a Dr. Zausner. Other members were named Dr. Frey, Dr. Halpern, Schnorr, Lehrer, Becker and others.

If the Germans called for 1,500 workmen, the Council would call up about 1,700 or 1,800 and force the additional hundreds to sit around the "Bleich" all day long, in expectation of an emergency call. If an assigned worker did not show up on time, he had to be reported or handed over to the German police. Curiously enough, this Council offered a certain degree of relief to the Jews of the town. It eliminated the former humiliation of Jews being dragged about by German or Ukrainian soldiers who wanted to torture or make fun of innocent Jews. Yet there was not much relief, really, for even after the Council placed the Jewish workers, the German and Ukrainian overseers tortured many Jews during working hours.

Many women and elderly Jews suffered so much that when they came back from their "jobs," they were in no shape to continue at their tasks and the Council released them for a protracted period of time.

The Council had another responsibility—to distribute bread to the Jews. The Germans considered themselves to be too important to handle this chore, and so the task was left to the Council. The bread ration came to four ounces a day per person. The Council opened centers for distribution and this work led to other responsibilities. With each passing week, new claims were made on the Council and, in time, a soup kitchen was opened and, later, an ambulance station, where the finest Jewish doctors contributed their skill and know-how on behalf of their fellow Jews. In order

to settle disputes, a law court was established by the Council, and it included former Jewish judges and lawyers, who rendered legal and fair verdicts which were accepted by the people. Merely by threatening to hand over difficult cases to the Germans, the Jewish Council was able to enforce its sentences and thus give itself a definite authority. The Council even established a prison, which was used occasionally. All these institutions were housed in the Jewish Council Building in the "Bleich."

With all of its new tasks, the Council needed money, so it imposed a tax on all Jews under its authority. A special tax office, with executives, was created. At the beginning of each month, each Jew received his assessment from the tax office, with an order of payment. The Jews themselves had previously informed the office how much they could afford to pay. If, however, the demand was too high, in his opinion, he was permitted to argue his case. If he lost, he had to accede or receive a warrant of distress and a threat to sell his possessions. This, however, happened rarely.

As the Council's activities expanded, it was found necessary to create a Jewish militia, headed by a Jewish commander. This militia was accorded recognition by the district prefect and the militiamen were limited in proportion to the number of Jews in a given area. A member wore no uniform, except a blue cap with a Star of David and a number. Sambor had 40 such militiamen.

In the beginning, decent men belonged to the militia, but, as it was realized that the Germans planned to use the group against the Jews themselves, the better men left its ranks, leaving behind only the disreputable men who were insensible to the sufferings of their fellows. Some of them were sufficiently depraved to take advantage of their victims and live well at their expense. It did not take long before the Jewish militia was unpopular and hated in some quarters.

Nevertheless the Germans issued anti-Jewish ordinances, all of which were aimed at demoralizing, robbing and humiliating the Jews. Homes and real estate were expropriated, although this was less sweeping than it sounds, for the Soviet Government previously had nationalized most of the Jewish houses and properties. All radios and all precious stones, gold, silver, copper and foreign currency had to be yielded up to the Nazis on pain of death. All dray horses, bicycles and other equipment used for moving about had to be surrendered. Domestic animals and poultry, too, were taken away, as were sporting goods and uniforms. There were other harsh orders involving limitations on moving about, a 7 P.M. curfew and the impounding of such goods as furniture and clothing. The Germans, as one could see, were quite thorough.

There were so many orders issued and so much confusion about them, that the Germans themselves were not always sure what the laws were. First there was an edict banning the Jews from walking on the sidewalks; then, another order keeping them from the roads. Under such conditions, where were Jews to walk? This led to a meeting of minds of the security police and the district prefect, and it was decided that Jews could not walk on the sidewalks or on the roads, unless they remained on either extremity of the road; that it to say, not in the middle of the road! That is how ridiculous it became.

On the matter of saluting. If a Jew saluted a German, the Nazi might become enraged because a Jew was being "polite" to a member of the Master Race, and how dare he salute a Nazi? On the other hand, if a Jew walked past a German without saluting him, a whip might beat down on him for refusing to honor a German officer.

These conditions prevailed at a time when the Jewish Council was doing all it could to bribe the German authorties into permitting the Jews to survive as human beings.

Dr. Schneidscher, the chairman of the Council in Sambor, was adroit in his handling of the authorities, bribing the right men at the right time. As a result, there were no Jews killed by the Germans in Sambor for a comparatively long spell. While the Germans were murdering Jews in other towns and cities of Eastern Galicia, Dr. Schneidscher was helping his people survive.

But in December, 1941, his luck seemed to desert him. The Gestapo trucks rumbled through the streets of Sambor and it appeared that death was about to visit the Jews who had, unlike their fellows, escaped their fate. The machine guns mounted on the trucks were silent harbingers of what was soon to come. Yet Dr. Schneidscher's luck had not left him. In desperation, he brought forth for the Gestapo chiefs, who entered the offices of the Jewish Council, heaping piles of treasures which he had been massing for a long period of time. This was the moment, he felt, when he had to do all within his power to dissuade the Germans from their task. Anticipating such a crisis, Dr. Schneidscher had sent young Jews into Jewish homes to collect hundreds of golden wedding rings, —and this final mount of gold saved the day. The Germans collected, and withdrew.

The terrified Jews of Sambor could scarcely believe their ears when they heard the trucks back up and leave the town. But the Gestapo did not rest that day. To waste bullets was not their custom. The Germans drove into the two neighboring towns and proceeded to massacre the Jews there. Sambor had been spared, but Jews were killed that day.

During the first months, the economic situation of the Jews in Sambor was slightly better than that of their fellow Jews in nearby towns. The Poles in the town did not participate in attacks against the Jews with the same intensity as the Ukrainians. In the Winter of 1941-42, however, life became so difficult that Jews died of hunger in the streets,

and soon the Jews everywhere were equally miserable in their unhappy lives.

In the meantime, the war continued. The Germans had not conquered Russia in eight weeks, as they had predicted they would, nor did the offensive of October, 1941 bring the Germans their anticipated successes. We, for our part, were confident that history would repeat itself and, as in the Napoleonic invasion, the Germans would stumble and fall.

When the United States entered the war in December, 1941, it meant, so far as we were able to figure it, certain defeat for Hitler. But we also believed that the possibility of a rapid end to the war was now over. We felt pessimistic for another reason. Now that the Americans had come into the fight, Hitler would no longer feel restrained to go easy in his persecution of the Jews, for American public opinion was no longer a factor to the Germans. Death's grim head could now grin over the thought of killing Jews in ghettos, open streets and concentration camps.

In December, 1941, there was another bit of action which few people in the outside world knew anything about, but which was important to us. The Germans issued their "fur-decrees." This meant that all furs, or fur coats, were to be yielded up to the enemy. The Germans understood that Russian winters were freezing cold and if we gave up our warm coats, not only would we suffer, but the Nazis would be enabled to survive the Russian air. Should we give up our coats and help our deadly foes to escape from a cold death in snow, ice or storm?

The Jews had an answer to this decree, painful though it was. Instead of delivering the furs to the Germans, we burned them! This "fur action" was carried out simultaneously in various towns and villages. Yet not a week went by without a German finding a Jew with furs and shooting him for it. So desperate were the Germans for furs that they became "hotter" properties than gold or diamonds or dollars.

Books in Sambor

It had been our intention to remain in Sambor, if we could, until the end of the war. The Jewish Council had to pay a small sum of money to register us as permanent residents. We were assigned to various tasks and, after I had been given some heavy work, I was re-assigned to a better, cleaner job of sorting out books, in many languages, which had come to Sambor from other towns because Sambor was to be developed by the Soviets into a cultural center for the entire area.

Thousands upon thousands of books—in Russian, Ukrainian, Yiddish and German—had been collected in Sambor by the Soviets, who intended to make Sambor the cultural heart of the district. When the Russians withdrew in July, 1941, the books fell under German control and the labor office was ordered to assign ten Jews to the task of cataloguing the volumes.

Work was already in full swing when I joined the staff. My colleagues were for the most part teachers and lawyers. I was to be the expert in Jewish literature. This work was the only job I had during the entire occupation which gave

me pleasure, and which involved no torture, humiliation and aggravation. Who can imagine what it means to be an enslaved, humiliated, tormented man, living always in the shadow of death—and finally to be able to fill the void in his heart with books, cultural symbols of the best in humankind?

I enjoyed myself at that time; and it was a rare opportunity I had, in view of the world about me. After a year of literally vegetating under conditions unworthy of human life, I was able to read once more, to study for a few hours every day! I had thousands of books at my fingertips: volumes on technological subjects, medicine, philosophy, sociology, economics, history, the science of war. With an almost unquenchable thirst for knowledge, I became absorbed in many books, and thus I forgot the bitter, dreary reality of my life. My colleagues were like myself. They, too, buried themselves behind and within mountains of books. We sat together and read. Never did I hear them say—although they may have thought it—"We are sitting here, enjoying books while our fellow Jews are subjected to heavy labor and menial and humiliating tasks." The pleasure was too unexpected, too sweet, and men are only human.

The local town commander came by once a week to investigate our progress. But his probing brought with it no particular anxiety or tension. We had to cope with an enormous number of volumes, which five times as many men could not really handle. His weekly visit, therefore, was scarcely enough for him to ascertain our progress. Our regular overseer, a Ukrainian named Wislocki, was a drunkard and he had but one problem facing him endlessly—where to obtain enough money for his liquor, coffee and opium-cigarettes. He gave us no trouble at all, especially when we bribed him with presents every once in a while and gave him our monthly wages, which amounted to 80 zloties. As there were eleven of us, our wages kept him comfortably in drink for a brief spell. In return, he more

or less ignored us and went so far as to "promote" one of our own group—Speiser, a former Austrian officer from Rzeshov ——as our "commandant." Not only were we left in peace under these conditions, but now we had an opportunity to aid the Allies.

What we did was not of key significance, but our lives were so intensely lived that we, at any rate, felt we were doing something of importance. We helped sabotage the German war effort, in our own minds, when we burned the military books that the Nazis asked for. Apparently, the Russians who had stocked the library, had planned to open a military academy nearby and, consequently, filled the town with military volumes. Periodically, we would receive letters—which came to us via Wislocki—asking for reference books on special subjects like "pillbox systems," or "camouflage," or "the technique of winter fighting." When we did manage to discover that we were in posession of such reference books, we burned them.

It must be stated to the credit of my co-workers that not one of them ever entertained the idea of yielding up a single title which might be of value to the Germans. Never did any of them suggest that we play it safe by occasionally "finding" a wanted title so that we should not be suspected of sabotage. On the contrary, we acted in unison, and one day made a large, blazing, happy bonfire out of all the military reference volumes marked "confidential." The fire grew so large and exuded such heat we were sure we would be found out, but Wislocki was, as usual, drunk and we escaped this time.

We did not fool ourselves into believing that we had done anything of real value in the war against the inhuman Nazis. But we did gain a small measure of self-respect, which the enemy had tried to beat out of us by way of humiliations, beatings and torture. We did know that we performed the forbidden act under pain of death. Danger did exist; it

was real and the fact that we succeeded in the face of this danger did help us to reaffirm our self-respect and to fan the flame of belief in our hearts.

There were, in this work, some rather light sides, too. I was occupied with the sorting of several thousand volumes written in Yiddish. Most of these books were school textbooks, although there were also some novels and other titles of creative literature. The local commander of Sambor and his deputy were most anxious to discover the "dark secrets" of the Jewish people and they believed that in these books, piled up and in disorder, they could extract those mysteries which intrigued them. Of course, they had read the Nazi newspapers and listened to their own radio propaganda, which stressed all the evils that the Hitlerites connected with the Jews. Nevertheless, they probably would have felt more secure in their hatred if they could find the books and read them for themselves.

Periodically, the commander and his deputy would stride into my room and stand before the piled-up volumes and look at them curiously and desperately. Here, in front of them, were the Jewish treasures that eluded them and others like them. Here they stood, at the source, as it were, of Judaism, but how were they to learn what lay hidden in these undecipherable pages?

Should we have told these men that the written material was but the product of a morbid imagination? They would not have believed a word of it, for wasn't Hitler making "authentic" statements about the Jews in every speech—and weren't the Nazi newspapers repeating these lies, which were, of course, truths to the Germans?

The commander was convinced that we understood everything in every paper we handled but that we were unwilling to unlock the secrets for him. On his visits, he would look intently at individual volumes, hold them in his hands as though to probe into their innermost secrets. Then, with an

air of resignation, he would lay the book aside.

Once in a while, he would grab a volume, step up to me and bark, "What is this book? Quickly, don't lie! What's in it? What does it say?"

"A textbook for school children," I would reply.

He would pounce on a second volume. "And this?"

"A Jewish song book, sir."

"What! Jews sing songs?" And he would sigh and turn away, convinced that once more he had failed to learn Jewish secrets.

His deputy, however, was a bit more thorough. He chose one of our colleagues, a man named Herz Glaser, to teach him Hebrew. Glaser's father, the noted Rabbi Hirsch Glaser of Przemysl, had been killed by the Nazis, and the deputy warned our friend that he must teach him enough Hebrew in three months so that he could understand even complicated ancient texts. "And if you don't," he warned Glaser, "you will be shot."

To this day, I can still see the haunted eyes of Glaser, for he was aware of the enormity of the task set before him. "How can I do that?" he said to me. "Texts of ancient Hebrew books. Three months? One needs years and years for this." But like other threats, this one, too, did not come to fruition.

What eventually happened to all the books I cannot tell. The occupation came to an end, and after two months, so did our work. The story behind the end of the occupation and our easy days as cultural workers is tragic and came upon us suddenly.

A few days before or after Purim, in 1942, we were awakened in the middle of the night by a loud banging on the window. We saw a few faces behind the window and when the people replied to our questions in Yiddish, we opened the door and let them in. The group consisted of

Dr. Zausner, the vice president of the Jewish Council, Mr. Becker, one of the Council members and a few Jewish policemen.

What had brought them to us in the middle of the night? They told us that a group of Gestapo men from Drohobycz, very drunk, were now in the office of the Judenrat, and had come to take their revenge on the Jews because the Jews, some 2,500 years ago, had killed thousands of Persians during the era when Purim was first celebrated! The Jews who had come to us in the dead of night informed us that when day broke, the Gestapo was prepared to wipe out one half of Sambor Jewry!

I still could not understand why they had come to warn us. If this was true, it was unbelievable. Normally, the Jewish Council members were not this thoughtful. So I asked them the reason for their arrival. And they told me they had specifically come to me because they thought I could supply them with a scientific explanation of Purim which would, in some fashion, omit the killing of the Persians. I had no idea if I could be of help, but I quickly dressed and left my family to go with them. My family was upset at my going and I had no idea whether or not I would see them again.

In the ten minutes it took to go from my house to the headquarters of the Judenrat, I concentrated on the history of Purim and thought hard about what I could say. The only "out" I could think of was to use the approach of the Jewish historian, Heinrich Graetz, who had written that the story of Purim had no historical basis and that the Scroll of Esther, in which the Purim tale is told, was written in the Second Century, B.C.E., in the time of the Maccabeans, so that the Jewish people would be encouraged to maintain their identity. I myself never was persuaded by Graetz. I did not think, furthermore, that Graetz was right, that a piece of fiction could be made up and that the Jewish

people would believe it for thousands of years. Nevertheless, I felt at the moment, that to use the Graetz approach was the best way to handle this problem.

In the dark of night we reached the Jewish Council headquarters. I must admit that although I had been working for months for the German occupation, this was the first time I came into direct contact with the Gestapo. When I was led into the rooms of the president of the Council, there were about a dozen Gestapo men spread out in the two large rooms. Almost immediately I felt that I was in contact with beasts of the forest. Their manner of sitting about and talking inarticulately, made me feel they were beasts.

I stood in the center of a large room surrounded by Gestapo men. In the corners there stood some of the Jewish Council members, including Dr. Schneidscher, the president. The Jews threw me encouraging glances. Then one of the Germans, obviously the leader, asked me about Purim and why the Jews had killed so many Aryans.

I was prepared for the question and proceeded to reply. In my very best German, along the previously planned lines, I explained to them how great a historian Graetz was, and how he had said the entire story was a fabrication. I thought I had done quite well, especially when I sensed that the Jewish Council men were satisfied.

But then the German asked me, "Tell me, Jew, was this great historian you talk about, was he an Aryan or a Jew?"

It was at this time that I realized the tide was turning against us. Our lives depended on what I said. These drunken murderers, armed with machine guns were quite prepared to use them. Dr. Schneidscher was pale and I trembled.

But I replied that Graetz was a Jew, who taught at the Jewish Theological Seminary in Breslau and was a professor at the University of Breslau as well. As soon as I finished,

a man from behind me hit me over the head with a wooden club. Only later did I remember that I had seen the German questioning me make a sign to someone. I fell and finally regained my senses. When I did, the Gestapo spokesman was looking down at me on the floor and shouting, "You bring me proof from a cursed and filthy Jewish historian?"

Afraid that the beating would continue, I thought fast and said quickly as I could, "But I have further proof. There is a great German historian who has written that statistics in the old days are different from today, that numbers were counted differently."

If they believed me, it meant that the death of the thousands of Persians, or Aryans, could also be explained away, at least in part.

"Is he also Jewish?" the German asked.

"No," I assured him.

"What's his name?"

I stumbled for a moment. "I can't recall it. But I'm sure that it begins with a B.

He seemed to be thinking about my answers. Then he took out a pencil and scribbled a few words on a sheet of paper. He turned to me and said, "Listen carefully, Jew. We are going to send this information to the Institute for Jewish Research in Germany. And if you have lied, we will come here and wipe out the entire Jewish community of Sambor. And you and your family will be the first ones to be hanged, you cursed Jewish murderers! Get out!"

I left and a half hour later I saw the Germans leave the headquarters of the Council. The Jewish Council members were very thankful to me and at the break of day I went home with a loaf of bread under my arm, their gift to me.

We never heard again from the Gestapo on the matter of Purim.

The Storm

That trouble was brewing was evident from the rumors we heard and the new orders that had been issued. Late in July, 1942, the District Prefect at Sambor had demanded that there be an increase in the Jewish Ordnungsdienst from 40 to 100 men. Of itself, this edict could have been useful to us. It meant that an additional 60 young folks would be able to work at light jobs instead of heavy tasks. Yet we all realized that the Prefect did not have our benefit in mind. Then there followed a second order. All villages in the area were to be "cleared" of Jews within three days! It was suddenly recalled that six months earlier the Prefect had ordered the members of the Jewish Council to appear before him and had told them that when the time came for transporting the Jews elsewhere, the job would have to be done, in large measure, through the Jews themselves—through the Council. And if any of the German orders were not heeded, the members of the Council as well as the Ordnungsdienst would be hanged in the center of the town.

The day the new order was issued, the Jewish Council hurriedly called together its staff to make up a list of all

the Jews living in the surrounding villages, of which there were almost 100. The only Jews exempted were those working for the Germans.

In the Evidenzburo of the Jewish Council there were accurate lists of Jews living both in the town and in the villages, whereas in the office of the German Registrar the Jews had not been listed at all, for the files had been destroyed early in the occupation.

The Council members worked through the first night and on the morning of the second day the lists were ready. More than 2,000 names were included. The Council hired 100 carts owned by local farmers and sent the entire Ordnungsdienst to each of the villages, with a list of every Jew in that village.

Two days passed. In the afternoon hours of the third day, just a few hours before the three-day deadline came, the carts slowly entered the town from the various villages in the outlying districts. Jews, with their wives, children and meager posessions, had come in the carts.

It was a Friday, toward evening. The rain was falling steadily, drearily, as though the Heavens were lamenting the bitter fate of the village Jews. On the carts, together with the Jews, were mountains of bedding, without sheets; pots and pans, pails and shovels. And among these items were huddled little children, looking out at the world with intelligent but curious eyes. Aged Jewesses wearing kerchiefs, and white-haired and bearded Jews, who had not left their villages for decades, were looking at us with frightened eyes. They seemed to ask us with their eyes why they had been torn away from their homes, the houses in which they have lived for so long. Why had they been driven out in the rain, and where were they being taken?

As I sit now in my hiding place, in the hole under the stable, writing down what happened on that sorry day, I realize that this Friday remains in my mind as one of the

blackest, most miserable moments in my life. The unspeakable distress, the helplessness of these people—and our own impotence—come back to me with a rush of emotion.

The Jews of Sambor were terribly moved by what they had seen and, in an act of solidarity, they were about to take the Jewish families into their own homes—but they were reminded that at the last moment the German authorities had ordered all the incoming Jews to be placed in military barracks to be guarded by Ukrainian militiamen. The town Jews were not permitted to enter the building, with the exception of a few who worked in the soup-kitchen.

The Ordnungsdienst, threatened with the gallows or, at best, the Janover extermination camp, took great pains to carry out whatever orders were issued them. They were to have transported the unfortunate Jews to the town, but they found that the Ukrainians—among whom the village Jews had lived—were eager to drive them out. The Jews, reluctant to carry out their unhappy tasks, discovered that the Ukrainians had already done the job quite well enough.

The human tragedies involved in the mass moving of population were horrible to see. One case remains vivid in my mind. You will recall that Jews who were employed by Germans did not move out of their villages. This, however, was not always a "break" for the men and women concerned. There was a Jewish couple with an infant child and both mother and father worked for the Germans, and as a result, were forced to remain with their employers. Their child, on the other hand, possessed no certificate of occupation and, according to orders, had to leave the village. The mother, hysterical with fear and anger, could not leave with her child, for when any Jew left his place of work, the punishment was death.

The child was taken away from her, but that very night, the mother fled from her village and came to Sambor. With great effort, she was smuggled into the barracks and re-

united with her infant. The tension, however, made the mother temporarily demented and the Ukrainian guard reported her abnormal behavior to the German police. That evening, the Germans led the mother out of the barracks and attempted to pry the child out of her arms. Her violent opposition to the cruel Nazis was so great that they were literally unable to get the child away from her. So they drove the frenzied woman, still clutching her youngster, to the Jewish cemetery.

There, two shots united the mother and child forever.

Day by day, the situation of the Jews in the barracks grew worse. Life became more difficult, and the uncertainty of their fate made the Jews depressed and lethargic.

And then the rumors started up again. On Sunday, August 2, 1942, all was quiet, but on Monday, a wild story began to make the rounds. No one knew who had brought the story to Sambor, but everyone was talking about it. On Tuesday, the very next day—it was said—all the Jews were to be slaughtered!

In panic, Jews ran to the headquarters of the Jewish Council in order to learn the truth. But the Council officers refused to talk. Instead, they merely stood in front of the building, looking grave. Before any questions could be put to them, they gesticulated that they knew nothing, but the expression on their faces indicated otherwise. We learned that there were 50 boxcars standing on a siding in the railway station, which were to be used to transport the Sambor Jews to another area to be shot—or at least this is what the Aryan railway workers had told the Jews who had been assigned to the station.

Meanwhile, the hour of the street curfew was approaching, and all Jews had to hurry home. There, they remained in terror, waiting helplessly for word from Council officials. Although the Jews wore their heavy winter coats, they

trembled. What were they to do? Should they remain out-of-doors to avoid the Nazis and thereby gamble that they would not be caught? Or would they be better off to remain at home during the cold night, on the chance that nothing would be attempted until morning?

It was a terrifying period.

We, at that time, were living on the outskirts of town, and I was tense with anxiety, for inactivity in the face of iminent peril is difficult to face. Other Jews were no less upset. At the Council headquarters, the corridors and the offices were crowded with Jews who had hurried there to hide, in spite of the curfew. Council officials themselves were bringing their own wives and children to the building, to hide them in the attic and in the cellar. All signs pointed to a calculated wholesale slaughter of Jews.

Slowly, information began to seep down to all the Jews, and they began to learn what had happened on Monday. At about noon, Dr. Schneidscher, the president of the Council, and his Deputy, Dr. Zausner, as well as other officers of the Council, had been ordered to appear at Police Headquarters. There they found local police officers and Gestapo members, who told them that action was to be taken against 1,000 Sambor Jews. There would be no executions in town. Instead, the Sambor Jews, plus 2,000 Jews from the villages, would be sent to an area already agreed upon by the German authorities. The Council would play no part in assisting the Germans, but the Jewish leaders were being kept informed of developments in order that there should be no breakdown in plans. The Council would be required to list all "criminals," "thieves" and "beggars" to facilitate matters for the Germans. As usual, the Council was threatened with collective hanging if they refused to cooperate with the Nazis.

The Council leaders pleaded for a few hours time for consultation and planning. The Police accepted the plea

and agreed to wait, demanding brandy to help them pass the hours more pleasantly. The Jews of the Council were faced with a difficult dilemma: they were to become murderers or martyrs, and the choice, in either case, was a cruel one.

Time moved with agonizing slowness. Periodically, the phone would ring and the sadistic Gestapo would ask what decision had been taken. Some of the Jewish officials, unable to take a stand, went into hiding themselves so that they would not have to cast a vote.

Eventually, however, the moment of truth had to come. Rationalizing that they could perhaps save other Jews, the Council leaders agreed to compile lists which, they knew, would send fellow Jews to certain death.

No one seriously believed that the Nazis would limit themselves to the names on the lists; it was clear that the lists would indicate the houses in which Jews were living. At that time, Jews were dispersed throughout the area and had not yet been driven into a definite ghetto quarter. It seemed that in yielding to the Germans, the Council spokesmen were attempting to save their own lives and those of their families. It was thought by some that the Council leaders had received pledges that the Germans would have found the Jews no matter what they had decided to do. Thus, the Council leaders could dig for excuses to explain their capitulation.

When I learned what the final decision was, I ran back to my home on Kosharova Street, where my family waited in terror to learn what developments had taken place. Would I bring good news? Or would I be the bearer of evil tidings? I had to tell them the truth, bitter though it was. And I still remember how my youngest brother cried out in anger and desperation, "The damned criminals! Where can I get a gun? Any gun? I'd walk to my death with joy if I could take some of those men along with me! The dogs!"

Something had to be done. We could not simply wait in our room for fate to overtake us. There was no sense in thinking of fighting back. We had no weapons. My wife ran upstairs to our Polish landlady, to ask for permission to hide in her cellar. She was a decent woman of Italian origin and allowed us to use her cellar but warned us that the Ukrainians who lived in the same house must not discover us. Silently, on tiptoe, my family—consisting of more than twenty persons—began to steal down to the cellar. I decided to remain upstairs so that, if necessary, I could run to the Jewish Council if I were needed.

To my dismay and shock, I noticed—when everyone was already in the cellar—that my Ukrainian neighbor had been watching the entire operation. As I walked toward him, he smiled and asked me, "Why are you all creeping into the cellar so late at night?" From the tone of his voice, I realized that he completely understood our desperate situation. I knew Ukrainians too well to allow myself to be deceived, even for an instant, as to their generosity and charity. So I spoke up and said, "You know what is happening. I need help. And I'm willing to pay you for it. If you remain quiet, and tell nobody what you have seen here tonight, I'll pay you well." And then I told him, "I'll give you, right away, two new suits, an overcoat and a gold ring."

He quickly agreed to my terms and promised to do all he could to help me. I trusted him at the time and after I paid him off, we parted on the best of terms. I hurried through the fields back to the headquarters of the Council.

Excitement still reigned at headquarters, for people kept pouring in, regardless of the curfew law. Even the sight of a few dead Jews, shot because they had been caught defying the curfew, had not stopped the majority from coming to the Council. The leaders of the Council stood by, quietly, guilt written on their faces. The entire Council office was nightmarish in its total effect. A detachment of Jewish

militiamen was present, waiting for the awful moment when it would have to help the Germans catch and shoot fellow Jews. On another floor, a handful of officials were compiling lists of Jews to be taken away and murdered. There were 7,000 Jews in the town and 1,000 "criminals" had to be found. Of course, there were no "criminals" among them, and the very Jews crowding into the office would be on the list, innocent Jews, oblivious, at the moment, to their fate at the hands of those compiling the lists.

Then, at about three o'clock in the morning, a sound of trucks was heard in the yard. Everyone became panic-stricken and both town Jews, village Jews and officials tore about senselessly yelling to each other, and to themselves, "Hide! Hide! Quick! Quick!" And then the agonizing cry: "The Gestapo are coming!"

It was true. A long row of military vehicles drove up to the Council building, and in the cars were German police of all variations, well equipped with pistols, rifles and other military gear. Rapidly, the officer in charge jumped from his car, ran into the headquarters and reappeared with the dreaded lists in his hand and distributed them to his men.

In the streets there was a deathly silence.

And in each little Jewish home, the pious, observant Jews still slept, some of them unaware of the horror that was to come upon them.

These Jews had committed but one crime: they believed in one God, the Creator of the world, whose Laws they were to obey at all times. As the morning came, these Jews rose from their beds, said their prayers, as Jews had been reciting them for centuries, and awaited the new day. They did not know how that day was to end. Perhaps they should have been grateful for that innocence.

As I try to put down on paper what occured, I wonder if there were greater horrors. Did the world's breath stop?

Apparently not. But I find it hard even to recreate a portion of those hours.

When morning came, the whole town was surrounded by the police, who held their guns ready for murder. Every street corner was covered; there was no escape.

And the police were thorough. Men, women and children were driven from their homes and hiding places. Many had been torn from their beds, wearing only night clothes and stumbling about bare-footed. Mothers, shocked and disheveled, carried their helpless, innocent children in their arms—and these "criminals" were hunted down with rifle-butts and rubber truncheons and driven to areas where other police rounded them up in groups of forty and fifty. There was no charity shown. It was a bitter, cruel and poisonous exhibition of the bestiality of man.

When Dr. Schneidscher, the head of the Jewish Council, saw, from his window, that the "action" was not going "according to plan," he broke down and ran wildly into the bloody street to argue with the Germans. He did not get very far. He was slugged with a rubber truncheon and collapsed in the gutter. Other Council members carried him back into the building, unconscious. Dr. Zausner, too, was badly beaten by the police, who complained that the Council had warned the Jews that they were coming and, as a result, they had captured only a few hundred victims.

Slowly, the Jewish militiamen returned to the Council, beaten and blood-spattered, exhausted and angry. They had helped the Germans in an ugly job and yet the Germans had mishandled them, too, for the Nazis felt the Jews had not uncovered enough of the hiding places of their fellow Jews.

Similar "actions" took place in other towns as well at the same time. The Gestapo went into action in Turka, Old Sambor and Felschtyn. And they grew violent when they realized they had only caught a comparative handful of

Jews in Sambor. In a short while, new trucks filled with Germans rumbled into town from Lemberg—and the devil dance began anew.

The Gestapo men did not bother searching the Jewish dwellings. Why bother? Hand grenades were quicker and more effective. First a grenade would be thrown into a house, and then the police would enter. If there would be no reply, a second grenade would be tossed into the house, and then a third, until, finally, women and children, in pain and in agony, would emerge to be taken in by the Germans.

Those who could walk, were forced to march to the closest "gathering corner," and from there they were taken away. The infirm and the sick, who could not move quickly enough, were shot on the spot. And those who tried to run away were shot down by Germans who delighted in trapping and killing them.

The murdered Jews lying in the street were dragged away by the Ukrainian militia and were tossed on one grisly heap. Those Jews who still lived, in spite of terrible wounds, asked that they be killed. Instead, the Ukrainians laughed and joked among themselves and dragged the wounded Jews over hedges and ditches and flung them on the mountain of dead Jews.

Secret agents of the police followed the killers around, like hyenas of the battlefield, for when a Jew was killed these brave men would steal all they could from the dwellings of the helpless victims.

Every two hours, the senior officers of the Gestapo drove into Sambor to check on the "action." When photographs were taken of them on street corners where Jews were herded, or in front of a huddled pile of dead Jews, they were extremely proud of themselves.

That searingly painful day and night more than 3,000 Jews were herded together, half-naked, barefoot, beaten, resigned, helpless and unpitied—and led to their death.

I saw the massacre from an attic window of the Jewish Council building. I had been given work to do and had been told on this day that I was to be spared. What I saw shall always live with me. And then, an acquaintance of mine rushed into the building, when calm had seemed to descend and the killing had let up, to tell me that my own family had been driven out of town. He informed me that my wife, my father, my brother and sister, my in-laws, my uncles and aunts and their children—all had been hunted down and driven forward with rubber truncheons and whips. They had been forced to run at the same pace that the police were riding on their bikes; it was agonizing and brutal, and as I heard his tale, told no doubt with good will and in friendly fashion, I could scarcely bear to listen to this dark, unhappy fatal story.

Although the president of the Council, who had eventually regained consciousness, was now assuring us that all was not yet lost, I decided—now that I knew my family had disappeared—to give myself up and permit myself to be sent to the gathering place where my helpless family was and from which area Jews were led to their death.

It was late in the afternoon. As I walked to my fate, a German policeman ordered me to take along with me two young Jewish girls of about nine and six. The children looked at me trustingly and placed their hands in mine. The policeman with a gun and a rubber club drove us and beat us from behind and I was forced to run, clutching the children. I looked into their faces, and never will I forget the expression of their eyes: a blend of unlimited fear and trust in me, a Jew who had, in one moment, lost his entire family and was now running to his own execution. It was in this Jew that they had faith!

As we came close to the execution area—the sports arena, "Korona"—the German policeman called to two Ukrainian militiamen who, without a word, dragged the two girls

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away from me. I never saw them again.

I myself was driven to one of two groups in the arena. I looked about me. It was almost quiet, with only the children weeping. The others, about 3,000 men and women, appeared beaten and resigned to their fate. Some stood, others sat.

I saw hundreds of cops and Ukrainian militiamen here, with as many hundreds of Ukrainian spectators hanging on the other side of the high fence and watching our humiliation and agony. The "audience" was not only completely unfeeling about our plight but catcalled and mocked at us again and again. They laughed at us and sneered and called out, "Moishe, leave me your coat. In your grave you'll feel warm enough without it!" And others cried out to a woman, "Malka, give us your shoes. You can walk just as well barefoot when you are dead!"

In the midst of this horror, I looked about desperately for people I might know. Suddenly, I saw on the other side the members of my family in the filled arena. I saw them all together, looking beaten and resigned. My brother was not among them, but as my eyes searched out every corner of the area, I finally saw him, too, in a different direction.

Each time I tried to move forward to my family, police beat me back with their truncheons. One drunken militiaman cursed me and swung at me and did not let me pass. Then there came a terrible outcry, for a hearse from the Jewish cemetery drove into the sports field and the Jews trapped in the arena believed they were about to be slaughtered. Mothers clasped and embraced their children and raised their voices in despair. Children sobbed and fell into the arms of their parents and the police, in the meantime, fired their rifles wildly into the air. It was a scene from out of the nightmarish painter Bosch.

I did not give up in my efforts to catch the eyes of my family. During the tumult and the shouting, I screamed

and waved and finally was noticed by some of my relatives. Their reaction to my presence varied. Some were happy to see me before they died. Others believed I might help them escape, I suppose, for their joy was unbounded. My father, when he set his eyes on me, called out weakly, clapped both of his hands over his head and fell to the ground in a faint. In a few moments, however, he recovered and motioned to me that we were all in the hands of God.

I saw many other friends, distinguished rabbis and their families, men and women I had known for years. When I saw them in the arena, they were more dead than alive, robbed of all their possessions and driven about like cattle. The militiamen had already ordered them to yield their valuables and they had threatened the Jews with torture if their victims withheld anything at all.

And then, at about six o'clock in the evening, a new batch of Jews were driven into the arena—the members of the Jewish Council of Sambor with the Jewish militia. It seemed that the Council had not "cooperated" with the Germans, and, as a result, they, too, were to be punished. As evening fell, dark, heavy clouds started to cover the sky. The unfortunate day of the 21st of Av 5702 was coming to an end. Slowly, the Nazis organized the crowd and started pushing them toward the gate, where they were counted off in groups of 100 and 150 and marched away to appointed railway stations. Eventually, my own relatives were ordered into the fatal march and I saw them as they walked past, knowing that I would never see them again.

When they were about eight steps away from me, my wife was close enough to look at me, to make a gesture with her hands and to toss something toward me. I could not move toward her, but a Gestapo man saw her throw the object and he attacked her like the wild beast he was. His rubber truncheon hit her again and again, and she cried bitterly with pain. He continued to swing at her

and at my other relatives who tried to shield her from his blows. But they continued walking during the attack and soon they vanished from my sight. The German remained angry apparently, for I heard their cries even when I no longer saw them.

I was in a group which was among the very last to leave the arena. We, too, were marched to the last box car standing on a railway siding and when we were ordered into the car, the small area was crammed and then the door was shut behind us. All of us had been taken into custody, except for three or four members of the Council, who were given their "liberty" at the last moment.

Pressed closely together in the car, we heard thunder and saw lightning and soon a raging storm howled across the sky like a keen lamentation. It seemed as though the Heavens were mourning with us that terrible day—August 4, 1942—through which we had lived, and had seen sights and visions that would live with us so long as we ourselves survived.

As I crouched in a corner, with the storm raging on the outside, I heard a fellow Jew break the brooding silence within the box car, "Oh Lord, if it is your will that we be killed with our wives and children, our mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, at least, Oh Lord, grant us this wish: kill us alone and not the others, or let us all die in this storm. so that we no longer need bear the agony that faces us."

Slowly, creakingly, like a long, tired dragon, the fifty box cars began to move and were soon swallowed up by the darkness of the night. In the last two cars were 300 men, among whom I was one. We were destined for the Janover Camp.

Janover Camp

"All hope abandon
Ye who enter here."
—Dante: *Divine Comedy*

It was situated behind the Lemberg cemeteries, between sand mountains and surrounded by barbed wire—this place of terror and murder. It was near the Kleperov station at the end of Janover Street, and it was there that the bloom of Jewish youth was crushed.

As we approached it, the rumors we had heard of its nightmarish qualities seemed wild indeed. It appeared to be a harmless place, with a handful of houses for the SS officers near the gate; some wooden barracks and a few small houses and a couple of watchtowers, both within and without the gate. Of course, there were guards; but surely, this was not a dangerous place, in spite of the stories.

Still, as we came closer, we gained—within our sensitive souls—a hint of peril. Why were the wire fences double-barbed? And why were there fences even within the camp, which itself was cut off from the outside world by other fences?

And at the entrance there was a large sign that read: "Zwangsarbeitslager SS und Polizeifuehrer."

Gradually, yet within a brief period of time, the meaning of Janover Camp entered deep into our hearts. For we

soon discovered that the human being was of no value in this God-forsaken area. All the human beings transported here already had been sentenced to death. Without their own awareness of it, they were already in the grave. And the cross-section of humanity was large. Representatives of all the professions were here, as well as craftsmen. There were mechanics, shoemakers and carpenters; tailors, furriers and locksmiths; welders, musicians and veterenarians. And there were, alas, rabbis, lawyers and doctors; poets, druggists and writers. The Germans had been thorough. They had missed up on nobody and nothing.

And the German Police, in their devilish thoroughness, deliberately set about to wipe out all vestiges of dignity and decency within the souls of the inmates. Every Jew's head was shaven, and on his rags were affixed two yellow rags, one on the front and the other on the back of his jacket. The back of the jacket was smeared with a broad stripe, from the collar to the bottom of the jacket, thus distinguishing the victims from their oppressors.

Curiously, the Jews at Janover were forbidden to wear the armlets with the Star of David, for it would then have become possible (the chances were slight, however) for Jews to escape and mingle with Jews still at "liberty", who had to wear the Star of David. Thus, the Janover "insignia" was supposed to preclude escape. In addition, there were non-Jews at Janover—Polish and Ukrainian criminals, who wore red rags, not yellow ones. They, too, were distinguished from the Jews while, at the same time, being separated from the Germans.

We were all put to work, some within the camp grounds; others on the outside. We were organized into brigades which were by no means fixed as to numbers. Some had twenty men; others, more than a hundred. The SS chose a camper as a foreman and called him "Brigadier." The larger brigades had a foreman and one or two deputies.

The camp leader was named Wellhaus. He was tall and lean, in his thirties, and his head was too small for his extremely long neck. His voice was hoarse and always excited. He was an SS man, an Oberscharfuehrer. So was his deputy Rokita, who was about 50 years of age, medium-sized and stout. He had a clean-shaven head and an equally clean-shaven face. He spoke softly and it was rumored that he had been a ragtime musician in the "old days." There were a few others who made their positions felt. One was Scharfuehrer (group leader) Kolanka, who was unable to put together an intelligible sentence in any language, even in German. His companion, Schoenkebach, was a fit friend to him. The rest of the "staff" consisted of unranked SS men.

Each day began cruelly but typically, with the beating of prisoners who still slept in their cots before roll-call. There were no bells, no sirens, no whistling to announce the start of a new day. Instead, the whirring of whips began the day.

No one was safe from this "normal" procedure, for there was no fixed hour for roll-call. Besides, nobody owned a watch any longer. How could we tell the time? Those who slept deeply were rudely and painfully awakened by the blows of the whip; and the early risers did not escape, either, for the SS men did not overlook them. And those who slept out-of-doors because the barracks were too filled with men, (there were 3,000 places for 12,000 people) saw the SS men run through the dusk, swinging their long whips, as though they were—and indeed they truly were—evil shadows come to torture the living.

It did not take long for the barracks to become emptied of men, once the SS troops had swung their way through. It was quick because we never took off our clothes. At the parade grounds, each brigade gathered and the Jewish foremen distributed—with the aid of his deputy—100 grams

(three ounces) of bread per man. And then the roll-call started with the group leader announcing the various work chores. Now and again, the camp leader, in his hoarse voice, called to his dog, Arrow, which liked to scamper through the lines of men. As there were many men with lice and typhus, the leader did not want his dog to become infected.

In front of the parade ground there loomed the execution area, where all punishments were meted out. Penalties were given out for practically any offense. If a man pushed forward a bit in the coffee line; or was caught with a newspaper, or a knife, a lighter or pencil—he was committing a crime. If he talked while working, or sought shelter in the rain, or smoked a cigarette—it was against the existing law. If a prisoner at work saw a cucumber peel on the ground, or picked up a bit of an apple which may have been lying on the ground—this, too, was criminal, and punishable.

Usually, the edict was 25 or 50 strokes, on the bare backside. Two SS men were assigned to the beating, and they delivered their strokes, from opposite sides, with short, hard truncheons. Those who managed to grit their teeth and remain silent under the blows, received the number of blows originally intended for them. On the other hand, if a man cried out, or tried to cover his backside with his hands, in an instinctive gesture of protection, he was given extra blows.

At times, a Jewish "foreman" from the ranks was called upon to help hold down the victims, and if they—in their own distaste at the job—did not grip the prisoners strongly enough, they, too, were beaten.

The "work" of beating Jews was too much of a strain on some of the Germans.

They often became short of breath and had to be relieved by others from their ranks. And once or twice a week, just to frighten the prisoners and keep them in a state of fear,

they selected a man standing at attention when the roll was called and shot him to death.

And why were men shot so indiscriminately? The Germans found causes. Dirty ears, an unwashed neck, and unshaven face—these were cause enough. But, under the conditions that existed, who could wash properly? There was a tube with water barely spouting from the holes, in front of the barracks. Yet it was unlikely that a man could keep himself clean, for the lineup was always long and only ten holes poured forth water. And there was no time to wait because the camp was on a schedule. And if one rose early enough to get into the line for the wash-up, where was he to obtain a cloth to dry himself?

A day never passed during which someone did not die at work. This was quite apart from the regular executions; the tests for the brigades to weed out the weak and the sick; the beatings and the torturing. Every day, as a brigade came back from its work chore, dead men were carried back, and people who saw us carry the corpses wondered why we did so. There was a reason. It was a simple one: the Germans kept a strict count of their prisoners and in the evenings, when the columns of men returned to the camp, the Nazi staff counted the men, both dead and alive, and checked the statistics against the morning roll-call. The dead were laid out and pushed; along side them were those who had collapsed at work that day and were unable to return on their own two feet. Shortly, the exhausted men were "liquidated" and, together, with the corpses, were thrown into a ditch.

The moment when men, innocent men, were chosen from the roll-call lists and indiscriminately selected for death, remains vivid in my mind and can scarcely be believed by those who were not with us. Yet this "hot roll-call," as it was labelled, was a common event, and its grim chronology of events should be put down on paper.

It is dark in the camp and the watchtower reflectors dart their dazzling lights on the brigades returning from their work and now assembling on the parade grounds. SS men carefully examine the men to see if they are "properly" dressed. The camp officials march about, looking important and the commanders give sharp orders. The troops, helmeted and armed, stand at stiff attention. There is a mounted stage, on which the commander moves about and when he barks, "At ease!" to his men, we become rigid with fear—for it is at this moment that the Nazis are to decide how many of us—and which of us—are to be executed.

Four prisoners will be killed for each man who has escaped during this day. The percentages are known to us. There is no mystery about it. It is a terrible moment and we stand in line, sluggish yet aware of the fate that may soon befall us. The men on the stage are the masters of Life and Death. Meanwhile, 12,000 men wait for the Word from the Nazi spokesman. And the pious Jews among us mouth the "Vidui," the Jewish prayer before death, quietly and slowly to themselves. ". . . *Oshamnu* . . . *bogadnu* . . . . . *gozalnu* . . ."

Then the camp leader, Wellhaus, stalks along the lines, flanked by his SS men. He approaches the Jewish brigade leader and asks, "How many are missing here?"

In a trembling voice, the leader responds, "Two."

Slowly, Wellhaus strips his glove off his right hand and barks, "Shoot eight!" And then, in his hoarse, excited voice, he cries out, "Come on! Come on! Come on! Come on!"

With each cry, another man is dragged from his group, and then suddenly, eight victims are separated from the rest. And in this same way, the Nazi comes up to every brigade, and the same act is worked out. Men are chosen at random, blindlessly, without cause or reason. Yet the few Polish and Ukrainian brigades are not subjected to this torture,

to this murder. The Nazi leader passes them by. It is enough for him that he has chosen Jews.

The men are marched to the front, to the execution area and they are lined up in military fashion. Meanwhile, five SS men step forward from their own ranks, march to the back of the victims' formation and lift their rifles and point them at the helpless Jews. Five shots ring out in the cold air, and the Jews drop to the ground, dead. Immediately, the SS men fall back into ranks and are followed by another group of five, who, in turn, execute their own orders, killing another five Jews.

And thus it goes, like clockwork. Germans will march and guns will be fired and men will be killed. Yet not all die at once. Some die slowly, agonizingly. Others writhe like worms in their own blood. It is then that Wellhaus approaches the wounded men on the ground. He shoots carefully in the back of the neck, and his bullets quiet the men, sending them to permanent rest.

This is a day of murder, a "hot roll-call."

The special brigade, called the "Death Brigade," under the command of its leader, Scheftelowitz, lay the executed prisoners on stretchers and carried them into the valley behind the camp. First, however, they undressed the corpses completely. Now, free from their torment, the dead Jews were thrown into a ditch, and the execution area was again strewn with sand to absorb the blood, which was still warm.

Why don't the victims fight against their tormentors? Why do they submit so passively to the executions? How do a handful of men control thousands? Surely, this question comes to mind, and there are those who cannot believe the truth of these actual events.

But examine the prisoners, if you will.

They have been starved for a long time. They are emaciated and wretched, stripped of their dignity and of hope.

Many of them are psychologically ready for death, and if there are those who flirt with the idea of revolting, the barbed-wire enclosures, the posted machine guns stop their thoughts, even if they have them, and few do. Remember, again, what has happened to these people. They have been worn down through lack of sleep. They have been beaten, uncared for, dragged out of their homes, their wives and children murdered before their very eyes. They have been existing on a primitive level of life, with self-confidence destroyed and the instinct for self-preservation trampled upon. To what end should a man fight? Death appeared inevitable in any case.

I saw behavior in this camp that is beyond description, for it involved the inhumanity of man to an extraordinary extent. The suffocating air in the barracks; the constant hunger, and the stomach ailments that developed as a result of the putrid food; the robberies, the hygiene problems and the vermin—all these remain in the mind and cannot be projected to the stranger who did not live through our lives.

When a man died at night, the event scarcely excited comment, so immune had we become to death. The boundaries between life and death were wiped away, and at times, the man who remained alive did not even move himself away from what had become a corpse and was no longer a living, breathing human being.

The few dozen Christian prisoners in the camp, (who were murderers who had originally been sentenced to death and were now in for life) were no better off than the rest of us, except that they were not shot—in itself an item of some importance, but not as major as it would seem to an outsider. The Christians, like the Jews, worked hard, were whipped and tortured. They, too, were brought to the execution area; but they survived. If a Christian became seriously ill, he was sent to the tiny camp hospital. The same illness

in a Jew meant the death sentence. The Christians had another "break" in their favor. The Poles and the Ukrainians received packages from Polish and Ukrainian committees, which included some food and cigarettes and notes from home. They had hope for the future, too, for they were sent home from time to time. Who was there to send us greetings and packages? And we had no hope of release, except through death. Did anyone do anything to make us feel that we were human beings? Where were the compassionate hearts? The only comfort we had was that we had not too long to stay in the camp, because how long could we survive this hell?

Adventures of Bathing

Every second and third Saturday of the month, all the victims were taken to the Jewish bathing house in Lemberg. We had to strip ourselves of all our clothing, but in return for our old clothes, we were given clean garments. We wore, as part of our old clothes, only our shoes. Everything else was new and fresh. This might lead the reader to believe that we were happy to prepare for the baths for we were soiled and vermin-ridden, and yet here we were about to be cleaned and washed. It should have been a happy occasion. Instead, it was quite the reverse. Every prisoner felt the spear of fear when he heard he was to be led to the bathing house. Perhaps, a detailed account of what occurred will help to explain the fear.

We would be led to the bathing house, 12,000 strong, guarded by SS men and Askaris.

The Askaris accompanying us as guards were soldiers of the Soviet Army serving under General Wlassov, who betrayed the Soviets and joined with the Germans a few months after the beginning of the German-Russian War in 1941. The Germans had placed them into units as guards

in labor camps to help the SS men. They were no less cruel than their masters and participated as enthusiastically in the atrocities.

Each day, they left the camp with the brigade and guarded it all day long at work and returned with the brigade in the evening. They were also helped by the Jewish militia from Lemberg. The Askaris also guarded the brigades when they were led to their baths.

The streets we passed through on the way to the bathing area had been blocked off and the doors of the houses on the blocks were shut tight. We were pressed closely together in columns and the guards were prepared to shoot down any man who stepped out of line. The Nazis barked their marching orders, but the only other sound was the monotonous clapping of shoes with the wooden soles we wore.

As the columns of prisoners entered the Jewish area in Lemberg where we were to be washed, the SS men snapped a "Sit down!" order and we sat down immediately on the pavements of the streets around the bathing house. We had to sit utterly quiet, for any movement was rewarded by a bullet; sometimes we sat this way for hours at a time.

In the bath-house itself, there were only three rooms for the 12,000 men. In the first room, the prisoners undressed, leaving their clothes and underwear in a heap in the middle of the room. When one left this room, he did not return to it.

The prisoners were allowed to take only their shoes, coffee cups and haversacks. They would never see their clothes again and if they were to try to regain them, they would never live to wear them. In the second room, one took a shower, waiting, with shoes, coffee cup, and haversack in hand, for his turn under the water.

What a pleasure it was to feel the hot water over the dirty and tired body! Yet one could not indulge in joy because there was always the fear that the shoes and other

"possessions" might become sopped, or stolen.

In the third room, fresh underwear and clothing was issued by officials of the Lemberg Jewish Council, and we received a pair of trousers, a jacket, a shirt. For those of us who were veterans, the exchange of clothing meant that we were getting old, used, but clean clothes—a slight improvement over what we had left behind. But for some, the newcomers, it was a comedown; they had yielded up decent clothing and now had disinfected rags. They were clean, but they were still rags. And when one donned them, he looked like everyone else—a Janover Camp inmate.

Those prisoners who had managed always to sleep outside of the barracks kept free of vermin, but now, as they dressed in the new clothes, they picked up lice, for the disinfectant did not kill the lice, only narcotized them. Now, as soon as they came into contact with a human body, they came alive once more.

As we walked out of the third room, Jewish women members of the Lemberg Jewish Council stood near long tables and served us a thick soup with bread. Each prisoner received a full portion of soup and a quarter of a bread. It was this combination of events: the bath, the clean clothes, the soup and the bread, plus a kindly smile and a good word from fellow human beings that made us—for a short spell—seem alive again. One prayed for the friendliness and the smiles more than for the food.

So far, this bathing adventure seems to have been far less perilous than we had heard and imagined. Why, then, did we fear it so?

Weigh the situation for a moment. A group of fifty men at a time entered the small rooms and it took them nearly a half hour to take their bath, or shower. The washing time was fixed from Saturday evening until Monday morning. Within these thirty-two hours, if one hundred men were bathed in an hour, this meant that between 4,000

and 5,000 men could be washed, with the rest of the men unable to clean themselves. Thus, about 7,000 prisoners had to squat about for a day and a half, without moving, without food, sitting like automatons in the open streets. When the bathing period was ended on Monday morning, they had to march directly to work, which meant that 7,000 men had to return to work, still filthy, weakened by the endless sitting, broken in body. And from time to time, men would die either from typhus, from weak hearts aggravated by the steaming heat in the shower room, or from the bullets of the Nazis.

The torture of the bathing period—for that is what it was, in spite of the superficial feeling that it was doing us some good—was not the only torture we experienced. It was difficult for me, and the others, to try to live when all about us was the vision of death. The Angel of Death lurked in every corner, every room of every building—and yet we lived. We saw exchanges between guards and prisoners . . . we became aware of sadists, inhuman guards, and we became cognizant of the baseness of human character, and we saw men die daily, in various and cruel ways.

By this time, I knew about life in the camp, for I now was here a full month. After four weeks, one was an old-timer, and the number of friends and acquaintances diminished daily. At every roll-call one could see other friends being led to the execution area. They stood silent, waiting for their bullets. And following the roll-call, I would return to the area to look at their faces before they were carried to the valley by the unit responsible for getting rid of them. I looked at my friends, and could hardly recognize them any longer.

By this time, too, which was late summer of 1942, the Germans already had gone through the towns of Galicia and had brought back their victims to camps like Janover.

Every evening, a group of newcomers would be led into the parade grounds for the roll-call. It appeared as though the Gestapo and the SS men were in a ghoulish contest to see which one of them could kill off more Jews. We, victims in Janover, were spectators to and participants in, the grim drama.

During August, 1942, more than 50,000 Jews were driven out of the town of Lemberg by the Nazis in a period of two weeks. Janover was the major collecting-point of the Lemberg Jews, and we saw the thousands pouring in—the men, women and children—lined up for execution or work. Families were separated; children were torn away from their mothers; and mothers were beaten with truncheons and tortured as they cried piteously for their children, whom they would never see again. It was the same cycle being re-enacted that we ourselves had lived through. It was not a new story, but this time we were observers and the pain was nearly as great as though we were participants. And in a sense we were.

As I sit and write these lines, my flesh creeps as I recall what happened a year ago. A year! Sometimes it seems to be a long time. And at other moments it seems to me that what happened twelve months ago has just been experienced. My mind flies back to the past, one year ago . . .

I am resigned to death. We are at roll-call, and the camp commander and his SS staff are approaching our brigade to select prisoners for execution. Suddenly, the commander seems to be pointing his finger at me and says, "Come on!" I am convinced that he means me. My time has come! I am not excited, nor am I upset. I am indifferent. But no, he doesn't mean me! He is pointing to some unfortunate behind me. Once again, his finger is pointed at me and I am certain that I am being selected. Yet again I am wrong. Once more, it is another. Meanwhile, the com-

mander steps away for a moment, and everyone thinks that the danger is over, for the time being. Still again he returns to our brigade, stands directly in front of me, looks right into my eyes, and chooses another victim, and another and then another. Three more. With me in front of him. But I am still here.

The prisoners are marched to the execution area and they murmur their final "Shema Yisroel," and we sense that they are being put to death. We heard the guns explode, and we know they are gone. But I have no fear in me, only compassion for the innocent dead. I am not afraid because I stand alone, I know. I have no one in the world and so I am prepared to die . . .

But then I learned that my brother was alive . . . and I found that I was interested in remaining alive, in surviving this hell. And because I had found meaning to my life, the roll-calls became a torment and a torture and I was weak and shaken when I lived through them.

I discovered my brother was alive in this fashion: One day, when I was in the camp for about a month, my friend Aron Halberstamm slipped me a piece of paper on which was written the information of how my brother managed to stay alive. Halberstamm, in handing me the scrap of paper, whispered, "It is from your brother." I could scarcely believe him, and I desperately attempted to find a way to get off by myself to read the paper handed to me. I finally received my opportunity when I was assigned to digging ditches for a sewer. I found a moment to read what I held in my hand.

It developed that my brother had remained with our family until one hour before they had been marched away from the collection-point. The women had become hysterical and tore their hair and shrieked to the heavens, unable and unwilling to face up to death. Only my father had remained calm and consoling. He thanked God for having

given him an additional year to live after the pogrom in our own town in 1941. Father reminded them all that Truth would. in the end, win over Evil. He spoke with deep faith and. in the end, the others became more resigned to their death. My brother wanted to join them and die with them, but the Gestapo men pushed him away from them, for they planned to use him as a worker. He continued pushing toward the family, but our relatives cried out, "Go with them! Maybe you will live!" And they shoved him away from themselves, as though keeping him apart from the death that they were soon to experience. My brother was ordered to join a work column in Sambor and that evening, he sneaked back to our home but discovered that nothing was left intact. What the ravaging police had left behind, our thieving Ukrainian neighbors had stolen.

Yet the knowledge that my brother lived, that I still had a relative on the face of the earth, that I was not alone, and the information—even if horrible—of how my family met death—helped to strengthen me and give me something for which to live. I discovered a meaning in life that I had previously lost. I had given up. Now I was once again alive.

Hope?

What were the hopes of the men and women trapped in Janover Camp? Prisoners who were penniless, friendless and living a miserable life in a hovel, and eating two slices of bread daily and drinking warm, muddy water? Was there anything to look forward to, besides inevitable death? And should we be able to escape, to what end? Where would we go? What would we do?

There was a theory—and I suppose it still exists and can be proved—that Jews always are ready to be of aid to their fellow Jews. Still, the situation was such that one could scarcely depend on other Jews, who themselves were starving, living in ghettos, unable to do anything to help their fellow Jews.

Every passing day dulled the mind, drove out expectations of escape. Each time we saw a prisoner shot or hanged, we banished thoughts of trying to get out of the nightmare in which we were enmeshed.

There were no newspapers in the camp, and so we had no authentic news of what was going on in the outside world. We had heard that the Germans had managed to entrench themselves 1,500 kilometers within Russia and our hopes of a Second Front existed although they were not based on any concrete evidence. We knew that the Jews living in the ghettos could hope and pray for the Second Front with the possibility of surviving. But what of the men in the concentration camps? We—together with the

camps—would be blown to pieces.

A man who lived through a full month in the camp was one with extraordinary willpower, because most inmates yielded to depression and hopelessness within a fortnight. It was not hunger alone that caused mental collapse. One's moral backbone was crushed within two weeks simply through thinking about the bleak future. The roll-calls, the killings, the torture, the sleepless nights—all added to the total breakdown, so it is no wonder that when we thought of the Second Front, we generally excluded ourselves from the calculations. We thought of ourselves as dead.

I once met with a prisoner who had spent two years in Dachau, and he told me that one could endure life there for as long as two years, but not in Janover. He admitted that Janover could break a man in two weeks. The difference was that in Dachau one could nurture the hope of leading a normal life some day. Here in Janover, reality smashed such illusions.

Once, however, we did feel some hope. It was an unusual event.

We were assigned an almost impossible task: to move sand from a hill to an area 100 meters away. For the prisoners, numbering some 11,000 to 12,000, only twenty-five spades were issued and the 200 wheelbarrows that were usable helped us considerably in the work. But woe betide those who were seen without either spade or wheelbarrow. Truncheons were freely used on them and gunshots kept everybody hopping. As the Germans whipped and snarled and shot and swung truncheons, darkness fell and confusion held sway. Panic stumbled into our hearts and practically no work was done. I remember that a Dr. Schorr, from Sambor, grabbed me by the arm and said to me, in a voice full of anger: "The Germans must lose this war! Even if they become ten times stronger than they are today, they

must be defeated! These people are no longer normal. What they are doing to us here is past sadism, past understanding. It is idiotic. They have lost their heads and their end must be in the near future."

As he spoke, one of the SS men strode past us, unseeing. His face was expressionless and his blond hair, falling in wisps before his eyes, gave him an air of concentration. He looked, at least to me, as though he were an idiot.

Suddenly, we heard the camp siren break into a loud, wild moan. The SS men started to scream at us, "Back to the barracks! Hurry! Hurry!" Before checking on us, the SS men fled and we heard the noise of airplanes overhead. Scanning the skies, the prisoners studied the planes and then I heard someone yell "Allied planes! They are ours!" And, in a moment, we all felt better, somehow no longer friendless. We lost our feeling of wretchedness. May the world pity us and help us!

We listened to the engines, and it was the most beautiful music we had ever heard. It was like a cradle song, a great symphony, a song of hope!

The camp leaders, as well as the SS men were so shocked at witnessing the planes that they did not show up for the next morning's roll-call, even though there was no longer any danger of an Allied plane bombing them—and us. Yet the very fact that an enemy plane had been seen over German-occupied territory frightened and disturbed them. We sensed it, and within the next three days more than 400 prisoners managed to escape. The gallows did not hinder their attempts—and they made it. But not entirely. For the Germans assumed that the Jews had hidden out in the Lemberg ghetto. The Nazis, under the pretext that a Jew had murdered an SS man, invaded the ghetto and hanged the leader of the Jewish Council, together with eleven of his co-workers. Twenty-four hours later, the Germans permitted the Jews to cut down the bodies, which hung from the

balconies of their homes, and bury them. Jewish Council offices were broken into and members of the Council shot at their desks. In addition, the SS Police warned the Council leaders—those who remained alive—that if the escaped prisoners were not yielded to them, all the young Jewish children in the city would be sent to the Janover Camp. The threat was a terrible one and succeeded. The Jews gave up not only the escaped prisoners but those who shielded them as well.

Despite this harshness and the double betrayals, escapes still continued. Hope apparently did flare in many hearts, in the face of the horrible life we led and the growing feeling that we were alone. It was the sight of the Allied airplanes that did so much to arouse us and awaken us from our lethargy. The Germans were determined to crush this spark of hope.

It used to be that when a Jew was found with some money, he received twenty-five or fifty strokes in the public execution area. Now, the Germans, in their cruel manner, found another way to torture their victims. If a man was found to possess a large sum of money, he received comparatively few lashes. But if he had very little money, he was given fifty and more lashes. As nearly everybody had very little money, practically every inmate became subject to the beatings. And the Germans grew more and more venomous. By this time, the possession of half a Zloty was tantamount to a death sentence. One day, the entire camp was brought before the camp's office and all day long we were searched and examined for money. During the first two hours, so many of us were found with a few pennies, that it seemed that half the camp would be executed. Every couple of minutes guns exploded and bodies fell. Eventually, the SS men became tired and bored with all the killings and simply quit, leaving the ghoulish task to the Askaris police and to the Jewish police, too.

Pious Prisoners

It is true that hopelessness gnawed at most of us, but I must report that this was not true of the Orthodox Jews in the camp. It should be borne in mind that the vast majority of the 3,500,000 Polish Jews were Orthodox. While some prisoners succumbed to despair and insisted that there was no Higher Power watching over them, most were stubborn in maintaining their belief in God's goodness and justice.

"God will help us," they said. "We do not understand Him, but He will help." And it was the pious Jews who held out more strongly than any of the other Jews. With brave steps they went to their death, when they died, and when they were selected for execution in the daily roll-calls, they went silently, praying all the while and reciting the "Vidui," the prayer spoken as death approaches. All others —doctors, engineers, barbers, musicians, welders, everyone —had melted into a mass of hopelessness. Only the pious Jew retained his individuality. Every morning, the Orthodox Jew recited his prayers and, whenever possible, wore his *Tfillin* when he prayed and then rose to face the horrors of the day.

The pious Jews observed the Jewish holidays as closely as possible and before the major holidays, they did everything they could to maintain the traditions, rituals and customs of their people. On the first day of Rosh Hashanah 5703, we were led to a bathing area near the camp and all

night long we sat in the streets awaiting our turn. Yet at dawn, many of us took whatever prayer books we had and began to recite the prayers for Rosh Hashanah. And when the time came for *Kol Nidre* on Yom Kippur, we arranged a secret meeting in a loft, which was already filled with about twenty men by the time I arrived. A Rabbi placed a tallis, a prayer shawl, around his shoulders, (Where did he get it? There were, at times, ways of finding and obtaining things) and began the *Kol Nidre* prayer, humming the traditional melodies with a broken, tearful voice.

We closed our eyes and saw in our memories the prayer houses in our native towns, overflowing with people. The *Kol Nidre* mood seized us even here, in a pathetic little loft, hidden from the prying eyes of the SS men. The words took on their deepest meanings and we wondered how many of us would be alive eight days hence. But we banished these dark thoughts and carried on with our prayers to God. We had once again participated in an immortal Jewish service at what was, to us, a moment of utter misery for the Jewish people as a collective entity.*

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*Quite accidently, I met this rabbi, who survived the war, in the United States. He is Rabbi Israel Spira, the "Rabbi of Bluzhov," known by this title to his many followers in Brooklyn, N. Y.

How was it possible for such a man to live through his experiences in Janover Camp? The story is almost unbelieveable. And this is it: When he was a youngster of about seven or eight, his parents, who lived in a small Galician town, took him along with them on vacation in Bad-Kissingen, Germany. He played there with many German children, including the son of the owner of the house in which they were staying.

More than thirty years came and went, and the Rabbi was now in Janover Camp. He looked closely at one of the German SS men and had the impression that the German was the boy with whom he played, the son of the owners of the house in which he and his parents vacationed. The Rabbi tried to approach the SS man and talk to him and finally succeeded in meeting him when the German was alone. The Rabbi asked him whether his name was "thus and so" and whether he came from Bad-Kissingen. At first, the German could scarcely credit his ears but eventually realized that the Rabbi was his boyhood companion. And he helped the Rabbi escape from the camp into the ghetto of Lemberg.

From there, the Rabbi was shipped to many other camps and ghettos until he finally arrived in Bergen-Belsen. When the American Army closed in, the SS men packed about 2,800 Jews—men, women, and children—into wagons and drove off for their execution. Somehow, on the road, the Rabbi managed to contact the head of the German Police and promised him that if he helped save the Jews, he, the Rabbi, would speak up on his behalf to the Americans and point out that he had saved 2,800 Jews. The Police Chief, realizing that the Americans would soon break through, agreed to the arrangement. A few hours later, the Americans arrived, and the Jews were saved.

The Persecutions Continue

After working, toiling and suffering for five weeks at the Sknilow Airfield near Lemberg, I was transferred, with many other prisoners, to another area, the Jewish cemetery near our camp. One morning, we were ordered out for a march, and were informed that we would labor at the cemetery. The authorities stressed that in order to destroy all memories of the Jews, all Jewish cemeteries, too, would have to be desecrated and ruined by Jewish hands.

Liquidation was the key word of the Nazis. Just as they were trying to wipe out those Jews who still walked the earth, so they planned to erase every vestige of Judaism. Tombstones, centuries old, were declared to be debris. These monuments, black from the candle wax which had burned for generations, stood in honor of rabbis, and the golden letters engraved on the stone, granite and marble were to have lasted for centuries more. But we had been ordered to break the tombstones, remove them and use the rock for paved streets elsewhere within German territory!

The work was difficult and required many tools, as well as muscle. We used mattocks and spades and hammers. With our spades and mattocks we shovelled under the stones and thus upset them and loosened them from the ground in which they had originally been installed. The hammers were used for breaking the stone, once it was loosened.

Three men worked at each tomb, two wielding the spades and a third with the mattock. There were two units with hammers and four more groups of prisoners placed the stones on a large and growing heap. Not a moment was lost; everything was organized and tens of trucks came around every day to load the debris, which was ground by machines and used to make concrete. Or, if it was crushed, the stones were placed on streets instead of pavement. The Germans found a use for it, while forcing us to destroy Jewish tombstones.

Those of us who were pious recited a prayer for the dead before undertaking the dirty work of desecrating the final resting place of the Jewish dead. We would call out the name of the dead Jew (which we read on the tombstone) asking that he forgive us for disturbing his rest. We would point out that we were working against our will and were being forced to this activity by brutal masters.

Some of the Jews, while wielding their mattocks or spades, murmured the "El Mole Rachamim," the prayer for the dead, and a half hour later no one could recognize that there had once been a tombstone where they had been working. Thus, all traces of long-dead Jews, were wiped away.

At about this period, I became friendly with the watchman of the cemetery, and this relationship stood me in good stead later on in my life. It was important to feel that I had a friend, for the Volks-German, named Adolph, who was in actual charge of our work, was a cruel, mean human being, a master who held a whip in one hand and a wooden stick in the other. Adolph would set one Jew upon another, ordering Jews to beat each other. He roared at the cemetery all day long, barking commands, seeing to it that Jews remained cowering and whipped. It was Adolph who screamed at us, "No sentiment! No sentiment! This is not a cemetery; this is a quarry!" He yelled so frequently that the

cemetery was a quarry that we paid little attention to the name of the dead men on the stones. Once, however, I examined the stone which I was helping to destroy, and it was the grave of the great Gaon, Rabbi Joseph Saul Natanson, the famous rabbi of Lemberg! He was the author of the *Responsa* "Shoul U'meishiv," known to all who studied the Talmud. Jews versed in the Talmud will understand how overwhelmed and shocked I was when I realized what it was that we had been forced to do.

And so, when I became friendly with the watchman, I found it useful to me. There was a sense of humanity again, not inhumanity in relations between men. Curiously enough, I never did learn his name. He was called "The Shammes," or the cemetery watchman, simply enough. Every morning, when he would see me, he would exclaim, "Thank God I see you!" It was a wonderful feeling.

We first became acquainted when he approached me and talked with me about my suit of clothes. He told me that on the following Saturday, we would again be led to the baths and that there was a possibility that I would lose my suit and receive, in return, a far shabbier suit. As it happened, my clothes from home were pretty good and they had not been taken from me during the first two times I went to the bathing area, because I did not bathe at all. Yet the time was bound to come when I would receive rags for my decent garments. The watchman suggested to me that if, through him, I exchanged my clothes for rags now, instead of during the bathing period, I could receive some money for them. I agreed to the transaction, and it was thus that we started to become friends.

The watchman had many jobs in the cemetery. He, his wife and his two daughters had a little room for themselves near the cemetery gate, and his wife ran, in secret, a sort of restaurant for the prisoners from the Janover Camp. One could buy a little soup for only five zloties and even if one

moved around in a bit of extra danger, it was worth getting into trouble to pick up some food which was different from the horrible soup given by the Germans.

My friend also served as a gravedigger and helped transport the dead from Lemberg to the cemetery. Even though the cemetery was in the process of destruction, new bodies were brought to it from the ghetto and buried without headstones or other identification. And when Jews from Janover Camp were executed during the bathing period, he was responsible for bringing them to the graveyard for burial.

I still do not know why the watchman invited me to his room for soup. Surely, he did not need my few zloties; he had enough money of his own, I later learned. But I accepted nonetheless, with pleasure. It was when I came to his room that I saw, for the first time in many weeks, what I looked like. He had a large mirror on the wall in front of his door, and when I saw what I looked like, I was frightened of my own image. I could scarcely recognize myself, so radically had I altered.

When I sat at the table and actually was offered a plate of soup, with a spoon, I realized it had been a long time since I had eaten like a civilized human being. I had nearly forgotten how it was to be a man.

Thanks to the watchman, I was kept abreast of the news in the world, at least to some extent. It was from him that I learned that the Americans had tried to make a landing at Dieppe, which was not successful; but he pointed out to me that the Allies were serious about bringing the war to a rapid conclusion. He informed me of many things and spoke with authority. It seemed to me that he had good political sense.

Meanwhile, as time passed, my brother continued to plead with me to try to escape from the camp. But I was reluctant to attempt it, for I remembered the springing poles on

which prisoners were punished; I vividly recalled the gallows and the limp, hanging victims. I had written to him asking him to move from Sambor to Drohobycz, because I knew that if he remained in Sambor, it was unlikely that I could manage a successful escape. The authorities knew where I came from; they would, immediately, I felt, check for me at Sambor, catch me, and implicate my brother.

Before I was able to hear from my brother that he had managed to reach Drohobycz, the watchman approached me and said that he was planning to get me out of the camp. He attempted this very infrequently, and he wanted to help me without receiving any payment. He had been successful two or three times. But how was he to get away with it again?

It could be accomplished only during bathing time and this is how it worked. He would drive his carriage in front of the bathing house to pick up the dead who were shot during the bathing period. Sometimes he was able to drag a live prisoner into the carriage, treating him as though he were a corpse. Already, he had discussed the matter with his assistant Jona.

That very day, when I saw Jona, our eyes met and I realized that he was clearly aware of the watchman's plan. And then, a few days later, I learned that my brother had sold all his possessions in Sambor and had fled to Drohobycz in the dead of night.

On Friday of that same week, the watchman told me that the next day was to be a bathing day, for the Jewish Council already had been alerted that it was to prepare the baths.

On Saturday, the watchman brought me a plate of soup, and we sat in the cemetery, among the graves, and talked about the plans for my escape. He told me where to go, on which street corner to wait, and how I was to make believe I was dead and how I had to react when I was tossed into his carriage. If I was unable to manage to show up at

the appointed street corner, I had an alternate corner. The action was to take place before dawn on the following Monday, when everyone was tired out after sitting around for a couple of days, and all the prisoners were indifferent to what was happening around them. If my group was to be led to the bathing rooms before Monday, I was to try to delay my entry, by falling back to the end of the line, hoping against hope that I would manage to remain outside until the appointed hour.

He shook my hand and said, fervently, "Good luck."

I was, at once, a bit more confident and believed that with the help of God, all would go well.

That same evening, after the day's work, we had assembled on the parade grounds of the camp. Oddly enough, we were not called and made ready for bathing. This meant there would be no bathing for us this week. As it had rained during the day and it was wet everywhere, the Jews were rather contented.

Following the roll-call, I returned to my barracks with a fellow named Grob, who came from the town of Rzeszow. It was thanks to Grob that I was living in this barracks in the first place. The barracks leader, a well-known thief from Lemberg was a friend of Grob's, and through Grob's good offices, I was permitted into this barracks.

For some days now, I had noticed that Grob was not well. His complexion had changed and when he slept his breath came fast and hot. He generally rolled himself up in his jacket, which he used to use as a pillow, because he seemed always to be cold. Yet it was very warm in the barracks.

It is clear enough why prisoners were generally willing to keep their sicknesses to themselves, for it was common for a prisoner to be shot if it was suspected that he was ailing. Even Grob, who must have known I would not report him, dared not tell me that he had typhus. He was afraid

to utter the word. I permitted him to take his own way out. I left him in peace, looking anxiously at his pale, drawn face. When we came to the barracks, he was perfectly happy to have escaped bathing. Had he gone, it would have meant sure death, for he could not have escaped the peering eyes of the Germans.

Finally, I slept. And then, as though it were a nightmare, I seemed to feel that hundreds of pairs of wooden shoes were stamping over me. I thought I heard shooting. And then I awakened—and it was no dream. SS men were storming through our barracks, hitting blindly, and the prisoners were jumping off their beds, rushing about wildly, and were gradually pushed to the barracks doors.

What is it I wonder? I pushed up against Grob. Maybe he knows what is going on. From the loud confused babble, I hear the words, "Roll-Call." Grob says, "Let's not leave the barracks by the door. They are probably waiting there and will beat us up." So we leave by way of the narrow barracks window, directly into the court. Others follow us.

Outside it is pouring rain and a strong wind is blowing the rain about. It is very wet and cold and we find it difficult to walk. We stumble against one another in the dark and slip in the mud. With heavy effort, we finally reach the area where our brigade has to fall in. Some of us stand there, trembling in the cold. Others are huddled together, in protection against the wind and rain.

Is this the morning roll-call already? But we hear the men talking and we learn that the roll-call of the evening had passed only an hour ago. We hear new rumors: that everyone is going to be shot. The glaring reflectors on the fences of the camp illuminate the entire area and it seems that it is daytime. We remain standing in the rain and storm for a few hours, and it is painful and terrible. Finally, we hear the command, "East Station Brigade—March!" and then, "Brigade—March!" One brigade after another

leaves the area. A long line forms as we march in the direction of the camp's exit gates.

We are marching toward the city to the baths.

What will become of Grob? I realize that it will mean death for him, for we will have to wait more than thirty hours in the streets. And there are now flooded streets where narrow lanes used to be. "Sit down!" and with the familiar command, we are forced to squat in the cold water itself.

In spite of the terrible night and the discomfort, I remember my arrangements with the watchman, and I move toward the corner we agreed upon. But I sit and wait . . . . . and wait . . . and wait . . . and the day and the night pass and the carriage does not come by.

On Monday morning I saw the watchman again, as usual, at the cemetery, and he signalled to me what I already knew: that the carriage had not come. At noon, when I had my soup in his one-room dwelling, he told me that he had not gone out at all because of the miserable weather and because he feared the violence of the SS men and the Askaris, their native helpers. He assured me that the next time around, the plan would meet with real success, and he hoped that God would preserve me until then. Two weeks was a long time to wait, as we both knew well. To live two weeks in Janover Camp was a great accomplishment and I would need the protection of God, who had preserved me until now. Poor man! He had no way of knowing that God would leave his side in but a few days.

Some days later—it is hard to keep track in the camp—I wanted to visit him at noon for a plate of soup. I was with another group of men, who were joining me. Suddenly, a handful of prisoners came running up to us; then they ran back to the cemetery. Apparently, something had happened in the watchman's room, but no one was quite certain what it had been.

In a moment, we heard the firing of guns in the cemetery. In a few seconds, we discovered what had happened. At about noon, the camp leader, Wellhaus, had surprised the watchman's dwelling and saw two prisoners there, eating at the table. Wielding his machine-gun, Wellhaus shot them both. Then, he killed the watchman's wife and one of his daughters. The other daughter had escaped through the window. Nobody knew what had happened with the watchman himself.

At the same time, we learned something else: The German supervisor of the cemetery, Adolph, who aided Wellhaus, was in danger. Wellhaus had threatened to send him to the Russian front. Adolph was terribly frightened by this turn of events. All afternoon he sat stolidly, like an idiot, on one of the cemetery graves with his head between his hands, staring into space. He was, at the moment, not interested in work. But before we were marched back to the camp, he pulled himself together, waved his whip in our direction and promised to repay us for all the danger he faced.

When we returned to the camp, we saw what had happened to the watchman. He was bound to the punishing poles; Wellhaus had not shot him. Instead, the watchman was being tortured. His face was ripped by whip strokes and the blood was matted on his countenance. As I passed him with our column, he murmured, "I am in great pain, my friend, great pain."

The roll-call this evening was later called "the black roll-call," and even the oldest brigade leaders could not remember so violent a roll-call.

Wellhaus entered and in his evil, hoarse voice kept calling out victims and four different times men were led to the parade front grounds and executed. Eventually, the execution area was covered with corpses and as men were called out and shots rang out, death ran rampant. Blood flowed

readily as men were murdered.

When the fourth group had been marched out and killed, Wellhaus calmed down. Then he ascended the stage in the area and told us why he had commanded the massacre. The blood-letting was due to the discovery of a few prisoners in the private dwelling of the cemetery watchman. This was the great crime the prisoners had committed—and *this* the punishment meted out!

Wellhaus declared, "We Germans do not need you Jews! There are enough Aryan workers we can use. We have Poles and Ukrainians, Russians and Czechs and Serbs. We have Greeks and Frenchmen, Dutchmen and Belgians. So if you want to live, if you want to survive, even for a little while, you'd better obey the camp rules."

Then he ordered that every brigade leader working in the cemetery be lashed fifty strokes. In addition, the Jewish policemen were demoted to the "rank" of common prisoner.

The counting of the brigades was then started. Ordinarily, this meant the end of the shooting. This time, however, men were shot as they counted. One small-sized Jew, through an error, repeated his neighbor's number instead of his own. He was ordered to leave the brigade and stand alongside the kitchen wall and count to the number sixteen some sixteen times. Trembling with fear yet relieved to have come through alive, he started counting. Standing with his face against the wall, he would recite a number and then turn around as though expecting a bullet. When he reached "sixteen," he turned around to rejoin his group. At this moment, Rokita pulled his gun from his pocket and quickly and crisply killed him. And as the Jew lay on the ground, Rokita, evil to the end, shot him once again.

During this night, I was wracked with anxiety. I had no peace. From a distance, I saw the poor watchman, still fastened with wire to the posts, trying to move. But the

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wire had cut into his flesh and his face had grown black. His eyes were now large with pain and shot with blood. There was dirty foam dribbling from his mouth. His lips moved convulsively. He seemed to want to speak, but was unable to. The upper part of his body was naked and a few hours later, he was hanged from the gallows. He wore only trousers and his tongue popped out of his mouth. His body swung in the wind. He had finally died; it was a relief for him. But the cemetery was now a real cemetery to me. I had lost my friend, as he had lost his life.

When Autumn came, it rained constantly. The air was wet and cold and the earth was soaked. It did not take long before typhus began to spread due to the lice. The prisoners, weakened and sick, were swiftly infected. More than two-thirds of the inhabitants of the camp were struck down by typhus, and every morning working groups of men carried out the dead bodies of those that had succumbed during the night, placing them in front of the barracks so that they could be reported as dead during the roll-call.

At about this time I, too, became ill. While I was smashing stones in the cemetery, I grew weak and rapidly lost strength. My hammer slipped from my grasp and I fainted.

When I recovered, I discovered myself lying between two graves, out of sight of the other workers. Apparently I had been placed there by my fellow workers who intended to carry me back to the camp in the evening as another dead prisoner.

I attempted to stand on my feet and after great effort I finally managed to drag myself back to my corps to return to work. I had to try to work again because if the guard saw that I was too weak to do my share, he would have to report me to the authorities and I would have been shot in the evening.

Fortunately, my friend, Dr. Schorr examined me on the

spot and realized that I had typhus. None of the men would report me and as the disease was widespread, the fact that I was sick alarmed nobody. Now there were some sixty in our brigade ill with typhus, and the brigade leader told me he would do all he could to cover for me. That night while lying on my cot I began to tremble violently. Grob, who lay near me, soon became aware of my condition and whispered to me that he himself had contracted the fever four weeks earlier. He instructed me on how to behave when I left the camp with the other workers and he thought up an imaginative touch to help protect me from the SS-men.

He owned a pink painting stone which he had obtained from his sister in the Lemberg ghetto. With this stone, one could paint one's cheeks after washing himself. Thus, the SS would not notice how pale the victim was. While helping me, Grob said, "Please don't tell this to anyone. It must be kept secret. If everybody learns this trick, the camp will be full of people with painted cheeks and we'll all be caught." That same night, Dr. Schorr and another friend from Sambor, Dr. Reich, visited me at my barracks and told me that as they had no medicine for me, I had to develop a strong will to live if I wanted to survive.

A week later I received from my brother a Russian coat lined with cotton wool, called a Fufeika. I was also given a good pair of shoes and began to feel better. My trembling stopped and my fever vanished. Once again, I was comparatively healthy.

I did have the will to live.

During the period of my illness, a great Jewish exodus went into effect throughout all Galicia, called the "October-action." Freight trains filled with Jews rolled day and night through Lemberg in the direction of Zolkiew-Rawa-Russka. The unfortunate people within the boxcars called out to us asking where they were going and whether we

could help them. We could be of no help. There were all sorts of terrible rumors about the eventual fate of these people, but we were truly ignorant of what would happen to them.

The stories they heard made them desperate and at night many of them jumped out of the boxcars, with their children, sometimes without any clothes and often fainting because of excitement and weakness. When the guards saw them, they shot them mercilessly.

A few weeks later, I met a woman who had escaped from one of these boxcars and she told me that she had wandered naked around the countryside for three weeks before she was able to find her husband at Drohobycz.

Slowly, each day we picked up new facts about the evacuation of Jews. We found out that the German authorities had established ghettos for the Jews in every town.

In August, 1942, something new was added to the armband badge of the ghetto Jew. A red letter "A" had been embroidered into the emblem of the Star of David. This meant that the wearer was ranked as a worker and the number of his working certificate was fixed behind the Star, which also had the German police seal on it. When a man wore his band, it was supposed to keep him and his family safe from attack by the Germans, as it was issued only to those Jews who worked within German establishments. The ghetto Jews who had not yet been assigned to work now desperately looked for jobs. It was more or less natural that unsavory "brokers," Jewish and non-Jewish alike, offered to sell such bands to Jews. Many people sold their last possessions in order to acquire these bands.

But now in October, when the new drive against the Jews was started, these bands were no longer respected. The Jews who thought that they were safely labeled as workers found themselves hustled into boxcars for liquidation and annihilation.

Escape Into The Lemberg Ghetto

One day I found on the cemetery my friend Jona again, who had improved his position a great deal since he had become a watchman. He was well dressed and well nourished. When he saw me, he suggested that I had sought him out in order to plot again to escape from the camp. He made it clear to me that it would be impossible to escape at this time. He did not drive the death carriage, which he controlled, to the bathing area, although he had received permission to use it even at night. He was simply afraid to take a chance.

In the course of our conversation, however, I sensed that he spoke this way only because he wanted to extract more money from me if I wanted his help. First, I offered him $20.

"Do you think I would make my wife a widow and my children orphans for a dog's price?" he asked.

I promised him $50.

He looked at me challengingly and said, "I'd like to see if you have the money."

I led him far into the cemetery, took off one of my shoes and extracted a bundle of American dollars which my brother had sent to me.

I gave him $10 in advance. He hid it hastily in his pocket and told me what he wanted me to do. From Sunday night to Monday morning he wanted to bring me, together with the dead, in his carriage to the cemetery. He was unwilling to do more than that, and he thought that my difficulties would begin after he brought me to the cemetery. Where would I go? Into what province? To Drohobycz? I thought that within the first few kilometers from Lemberg I would be recognized as an inmate of the Janover camp and that I would be shot down by any German or Ukrainian militiaman. I would not even possess identity papers and it would be hard for me to get into the Lemberg ghetto. And if I managed to slip in, who would risk his life by sheltering me?

I explained to Jona that I had plans of my own and that I had thought them through carefully, though the truth was that I was completely ignorant of what would happen to me. I thought only of escaping from this camp and getting into Lemberg. Naturally, I assured him that if there were any slipup, I would not betray him. We separated in good humor. On Saturday morning we already knew that we would be led to the bathing area that evening.

More than a full day has passed and I am now sitting at a street corner not far from the bathing house. From here I am to be thrown into the death carriage. It has taken me a full twenty-four hours, from Saturday night to Sunday night to reach this corner. I am wearing a cap and I hope that Jona will recognize me. I am lying in the street and I manage to nod every once in a while. The late Autumn sun was warm the entire day and I am not uncomfortable.

But Jona has been here several times already with his carriage and has not recognized me.

It has been a quiet night. The SS men are walking about with dark, thoughtful faces. They have heard that the Germans are being driven away from Stalingrad. The camp inmates who are sitting around me are tired and weak. We haven't been given any bread since Saturday morning. It is now Sunday night. We are beginning, all of us, to feel wretched, for if the men will not wash tonight they will be marched to work from here tomorrow morning at 6 A.M.

It must already be after midnight . . .

I hear the rolling of wheels . . . My heart is beating rapidly.

Cautiously, I look around me, and see that there are no SS men around. I lie motionless. The carriage stops near me and two men are approaching. I close my eyes not daring to breathe. Strong hands lift me by arms and legs. I let my head hang limply. There is a muttered command and I am thrown into the carriage, tossed on dead bodies. The carriage cover closes over me and the wheels roll on. I remember my instructions and keep my eyes shut, for the SS men usually stop the carriage and examine the corpses and scatter a few shots into the bodies. I think of the fate that faces me if I am to be recaptured. I recall the poor watchman who had been tortured. My flesh creeps while my heart pounds.

At length, the rattling of the carriage ceases. We have left the small streets behind us and in fifteen minutes we are in the cemetery. Meanwhile, I am curious to know how many bodies are in the carriage with me. I allow my hands to flutter about. I feel one cold body, but another is still warm. Maybe he is still alive, I think. Carefully I turn in his direction and I speak in a low voice. "Are you still alive? Tell me! You have nothing to be afraid of. Are you living?" There is no answer! Loneliness overcomes me, limitless and

terrible. How happy I would have been if he were still alive! How we could have helped each other, for I had as yet no real plan for escape. I realize how many dangers still await me, how unreal everything is.

The carriage stops. We are at the terminus. Stupified, I climb out as the two dead men are thrown out. Jona walks up to me and I give him the $40 I promised him.

"Where are you going now?" Jona asks me.

"I don't really know. But there is only one thing for me to do. I have to get into the Lemberg ghetto."

I say this because I once had many friends in Lemberg and I might meet up with some of them. I reassure Jona that I will never betray him and I begin to wander off into the middle of the cemetery. A day before, I left a spade beside one of the graves which I am preparing to carry with me so that I may be taken as a street worker. It seems to me that a ragged worker with a spade on his shoulders will not draw the attention of the SS men.

In the darkness of the night it takes me a long time to find the spade, but finally I manage and walk toward Jona. We reach his office, enter and sit down. He is well pleased with the results of his adventure. He is safe and he has my $40 in his pocket. He offers me a Hungarian cigarette and I ask him if he can lead me to any particular person in the ghetto. He pretends not to know anyone there and I think the reason is that he is afraid I will talk about how much money he now has. After all, $50 in American money is 2,000 zloties!

It is now five o'clock in the morning. I put on my jacket with my Jewish armband, which Jona had obtained for me and I bid him farewell and leave the cemetery.

I am well acquainted with Lemberg because I was once a student there. As I leave the cemetery and enter an open field, I hesitate for a moment in an effort to get my bearings. As I walk forward, all is silent. Suddenly I hear the barking

of dogs, and the dawn begins to rise. I begin to march toward the town and swiftly I reach Rappaport Street, which is near the Jewish Hospital.

As I look about me and see the familiar landmarks, warm sentiments rise in my heart, for I spent the happiest days of my youth here. It was in Lemberg that I was a member of the Zionist group called "Tikvat Zion," and where the Jewish intelligentsia met. The religious Zionists were particularly active in Lemberg. One of the outstanding leaders of the religious Zionist group was Dr. Simon Federbusch, the Hebrew scholar. Dr. Federbusch had left a deep impression on us and was, therefore, an added reason for my fond memories of the city.

Swiftly I pass through Rappaport Street and enter the Zamarstinow District, where the Jewish ghetto is situated. I see scores of Jews, wearing their armbands, rushing to work. I walk on, spade on my shoulders, and look neither to the left nor right. I finally enter the ghetto gate and feel that for the moment, I am safe.

As I write, I remember that seven months after I smuggled myself into the ghetto, I heard that Jona had been caught helping other Jews escape and had been hanged by the Germans.

In the Lemberg Ghetto

Before the German invasion of Poland in 1939, more than 100,000 Jews lived in Lemberg. Later, the Jewish population swelled to 150,000 during the Soviet occupation. When the Germans gained control of Lemberg in 1941, persecution of the Jews began, with three pogroms in the first few weeks. As usual, the Ukrainians played an active part in the persecutions and thousands of Jews were killed. Among them was the famous Rabbi of Bobov, Rabbi Ben Zion Halberstam, a Hassidic rabbi who had many thousands of followers in Poland and elsewhere in the world. Also, Rabbi Aaron Levin of Rzeshov, a leader of the Agudath Israel in Poland and his brother Yecheskel Levin, Rabbi of Lemberg. Professor Allerhand was killed later, probably in the action of August, 1942.

In one particular action, more than 50,000 Jews were annihilated in Lemberg and 40,000 more were jammed into the ghetto in Zamarstinow. By the end of 1941, the Janover Camp had been established and was inhabited by hundreds of Lemberg youngsters, who had been dragged into the camp by the Germans.

Life in the Lemberg ghetto was full of tension and distrust. The constant punishments imposed by the Germans, the killings and the tortures, made the ghetto a hell-house. When I entered the ghetto, I knew all this, but I was still happy to be there because I had an opportunity to live once more among my fellow Jews. Although I had lived among many Jews in the Janover Camp, I felt that many of us had lost the semblance of human beings.

But I began to lose my enthusiasm when I saw policemen and SS men. I fixed the armband on my sleeve, took the spade from my shoulder and began to work in the streets.

I scraped the pavements, cleaned up the fruit peelings and worked fast in order to avoid attention. In this fashion I worked my way deeper and deeper into the ghetto. By this time I had been strolling about for almost half a day and had not as yet seen a familiar face.

I slipped into a corner, took some money out of my pocket and walked over to a small shopping area where I bought old clothing, consisting of trousers, a shirt, a tie, socks, a hat and a light overcoat. I also bought some soap, cigarettes and food.

Loaded down with this equipment, I was now unable to work in the street. When I saw a barbershop, I entered, placed my spade in a corner of the room, sat down in a barber chair and placed my equipment on the floor near my feet. From the expression on the barber's face, I could see that he understood my situation. When he had finished cutting my hair, I tried to pay him but he grasped my arm, indicating that he wanted no money. I told him that I could pay him, but he remained stubborn and in a few words he told me how to get to the bathing house. I thanked him warmly, and even as I write these words I feel deeply obliged to him.

You good, nameless Jew! Surely, you are now mouldering in a mass grave somewhere. Did you realize how you

renewed my faith and strengthened my confidence at a time when I had begun to despair of people, even some who were Jewish?

When I reached the bath house and got into a tub filled with hot water, I sat in it for hours, wanting to wash all the dirt off and out of me. A clean body and fresh clothing renewed me and I gained new courage to face the future.

Nevertheless, when I went out into the street again I was overcome by sorrow. Where was I to go? Where could I spend the night? I walked through the streets of the ghetto, this time without the protecting spade on my shoulder and with anxiety in my heart. For the first time in my life, I felt utterly homeless.

It was dark. The streets in the ghetto were now nearly empty. Curfew was fixed at seven o'clock in the evening and the police were out in force. I was frightened when a policeman crossed my path and I realized that he might ask me for my papers. To escape him, I ran into a side courtyard. It was the house at Lokietka Street 14. Perhaps I could find shelter here. Cautiously I began to look about me. Gradually I discovered that about twenty families lived in this area. Pieces of furniture were in the courtyard and the inhabitants slept there. The area was jammed and people were crowded in like sardines. I managed to find a stool in the corner and sat down. Nobody noticed me. Tired and excited over my adventures of the day, I fell into a restless sleep.

Suddenly I heard the familiar, lovely chanting of Jews studying the Talmud. I did not dare open my eyes, for I thought I was dreaming and wanted to retain this dream in my mind's eye. My own happy youth was revived in my heart. Once again I saw the Synagogue in Schodnica and the corner in which I studied from dawn to dusk. I saw my beloved teacher, Rabbi Abraham Mersel, and I hoped he was still alive. I recalled all my comrades: Meilech

Backenroth, Max Gartner-Backenroth, Mendel Mersel, Berl Eichenstein, and the many, many, others.

The Talmudic chanting continued and I realized that it was no dream. I rose from the stool and walked toward the direction of the singing, which came from an area where blankets served as partitioned walls. I pushed a blanket aside and looked into the section. An old man sat at a table which had a lighted candle on it. He wore a skull cap on his head and he rocked to and fro as he studied the Talmud treatise "Chullin." A young man was sitting and studying with him.

When the old man saw me, he interrupted his studying and, with a kind smile, invited me in. I apologized for having disturbed him.

"I am sorry to bother you," I said, "but it has been such a long time since I have heard these wonderful Talmud sounds that I had to come here."

The old man asked me my name, where I came from and how life was on the outside. His name was Isaac Meier and, in spite of his advanced age, he retained his freshness of spirit and lively personality. The young man with him was his son, and as we talked we forgot for the moment the miserable conditions under which we were living.

As we engaged in lively conversation, the blanket was again shifted aside and a young woman, with sharp features and fiery eyes, came in. She was the young man's wife. She, too, questioned me closely on my background and on the work I was doing.

But she was not satisfied. She wanted to know exactly where I came from and whether I had escaped from Janover. I became uneasy and grew frightened when I thought she was realizing that I was an escapee. I rose quickly and told her that I did not plan to stay with them, that they were not responsible for me. In the morning, I said, I would leave the court.

I left the stall, although the old man repeatedly asked me to stay. I returned to the corner where I had slept previously and waited to see if the woman would report me, but I could not keep awake and soon fell asleep on the chair. Suddenly a strong hand on my shoulder awakened me. I opened my eyes and saw the woman standing in front of me, her husband behind her. I was about to ask her to leave me alone but she said, "Come with us, young man. I will make up a bed for you and you'll be able to sleep quite comfortably in our area."

At first I did not want to go with her and then she said, "Please excuse me for having frightened you. Today a Jew is afraid of his own shadow. We want to help you."

I went with them to their stall and they gave me an armchair with a feather cushion for my head and a feather cover for my body. I felt good again for the first time since I was dragged away from my own home. I was able to take off my shoes and clothing and sleep like a human being once more.

I was suddenly awakened by a loud noise. Men and women were scurrying about saying that SS men had entered the ghetto. I hurriedly dressed again and prepared to flee, but a moment later I was told that the SS men had just passed through. Once again I undressed and slept long and restfully.

When I got up, the sun was out and Isaac Meier told me that it was noon. I had slept, I discovered, for fifteen hours.

The old man informed me that he had been thinking of me and of the possibility that he and I were relatives. After all, aren't all Jews related to one and another? It developed that Isaac Meier was right. Somehow, we were blood relations, through my grandmother Libe.

His father-in-law, a chemist named Katz, was well known. He had discovered a chemical for washing clothes,

which was very popular in Poland. I realized that all Jews are indeed related to each other.

Isaac Meier was very helpful and managed to obtain a temporary shelter for me, near the border of the ghetto. It was the home of a poor widow who knew that I had been a prisoner in the Janover Camp. She accepted me only because she needed the money I was willing to pay. The widow lived in a single room with her daughter and son, although other young folks slept there every night while working all day long on the outside. The Rabbi of Wadowice and his brother had also found refuge in the widow's room. She earned her livelihood and supported her children by buying butter and eggs outside the ghetto and selling them at a large profit to the ghetto inhabitants.

It didn't take long for all the folks in the shelter to learn that I had escaped from Janover. Nobody spoke to me about it, but I was always tense and nervous after I discovered that they knew my secret. Whenever they heard that a policeman was in the vicinity of the shelter, they fled the room and left the widow and myself alone to face any danger. I sometimes hid under the bedcovers and prayed that I would not be found.

After five days of living in the widow's room, the Rabbi's brother gave me some unexpected good news. A truck driver, a trustworthy man, was parked at the Zolkov gate and preparing to drive to Drohobycz. He was willing to take me with him. I swiftly put on my overcoat and began to run toward the gate.

All at once I felt a heavy hand on my shoulder. Before I could turn around, a coarse, loud voice thundered in my ears,

"Stop!"

I froze.

"Your identity card! Who are you? Where do you work?"

He permitted me to face him and I realized I was looking

at Keiler, a Jewish militiaman, one of the most vicious and brutal Jewish guards in Janover Camp. He was one of the most feared men in the area.

"What do you want from me?" I asked in a controlled voice. "Leave me alone, I'm in a hurry."

He paid no attention to me. "I have to check your papers, or you'll have to come with me to the Kommandant of the Jewish ghetto militia."

By this time a crowd had gathered around us and I was surrounded by Jewish militiamen from all sides. I was dragged to the Kommandant and realized that what I was most afraid of—being caught—had come about.

I thought of the terrible death that was awaiting me. I remembered the gallows and the tortures in front of the Janover Camp. If I could have obtained poison at that moment, I would have swallowed it without hesitation.

In the Jewish ghetto militia Kommandant's office, there were a dozen militiamen sitting around idly, writing letters or playfully lashing their whips on their high, black boots.

"Who do we have here?" one of them asked. "Another bird that escaped from Janover?"

Keiler, by then, was roaring with rage and threatened me with all sorts of dire punishments.

Meanwhile, one of the Jewish officers behind a desk asked me, "Where were you going?"

This crisis had come upon me so suddenly that I was unprepared for the situation. I had to think quickly and said I was leaving the ghetto to return to my home as I was on a secret mission. "The Jewish Council has given me a job to do and I have to get on with it."

Before the Kommandant could consider my reply, Keiler called out, "Don't let him fool you! He's from Janover Camp and if you'll give me a little time, I'll be able to prove that he's not on a mission."

The Kommandant turned to me and said, "Young man,

if you have the proper documents, I'll set you free. But if you cannot convince me you are telling the truth, I shall have to turn you over to this man."

Another militiaman said to me, "We will force you to show us your papers if you are unwilling to do so." And at that moment he came close to me and tried to tear open my coat to look for my papers.

I decided to act boldly. I pushed aside the man who was gripping my clothes and said, "Gentlemen, I will let you search me over my dead body. The fate of an entire community rests on me. Lead me to the top officer of the Jewish Council and I will explain everything to him."

Although there was not a word of truth in anything I said, I was beginning to believe these words myself. Keiler became impatient, for he had to leave, and in desperation he suggested that I strip off my shirt and reveal the upper part of my body to them. His reason was clear to me. Practically all the prisoners at Janover Camp had welts and scars because of the beatings administered to them.

I said, "That's silly. I know you are looking for welts on my body, but what Jew doesn't have them today?" I spoke wildly in the hope that I could delay this entire inspection so that Keiler would be forced to leave without me.

As I write these lines, I myself wonder where I got the strength and courage to speak as I did. I can only say that my overwhelming fear drove me to these bold measures.

The Officer at the desk accepted my statement. "We will hold you until tomorrow morning in our ghetto prison. Then we'll bring you before our Jewish Council."

I insisted that this measure was impossible because the truck I was waiting for would not be there the next day. But my complaints went unheard. When the officer asked me my name, I gave him a false one. The necessary papers were filled out, and I was taken to the Baluckiego ghetto prison, with orders that I be sent back to Janover Camp.

I was placed in a small room which had a window with bars and an iron door. My cell was located in a small house surrounded by a large courtyard and guarded by two Jewish policemen. Two young boys were in the tiny room with me. A few hours later a young mother with her small child were thrust into the cell. She had been accused of breaking curfew and stealing.

I sat on the narrow cot thinking about my situation. I had not escaped from the Germans; I had merely delayed the showdown. I tried not to think of the future. Tiredness settled over me and I tried to sleep but my anxious thoughts gave me no rest. What would tomorrow bring?

Finally, I fell into fitful slumber. When I awoke it was daylight again, and the two young boys, Tobias and Nachum, were playing merrily and helped me forget my own misery.

At noon, two Jewish policemen and a civilian called for me. I was told that the civilian was the deputy leader of the Jewish Council, but because he wore cheap clothing, I felt that he was a subordinate official. I told him that I was willing to show him my documents if he could prove to me that he really was an official of the Council. The Policemen grew angry when they heard my conditions and left with the civilian, threatening that I would be severely punished for my insolence. After they had gone, I asked the boys whether the Jew was really a deputy chairman. They laughed heartily and Tobias said, "Of course not. Don't you know that the leaders of the Council have fat bellies and double chins? That man was Rappaport, a minor official."

Later in the afternoon, the vice-chairman of the Lemberg Jewish Police, who was the deputy chairman of the Council, arrived with two policemen. I was summoned to the courtyard and was told that the ghetto Council would accept my statement as true, but that I had to leave the ghetto immediately and promise not to return to it. If, by chance, I were

captured outside the ghetto, I was not to tell anyone that I had been there. In addition, I would have to pay a bribe to Keiler so that he would not try to track me down again.

So now I had to decide whether to leave the ghetto immediately or be delivered to the officials at Janover Camp. It was a terrible choice to make. Where was I to go if I left the ghetto? While life in Janover was fraught with peril, it was certain death for me to be caught outside the ghetto. I told this to the gentlemen deciding my fate.

They admitted that they understood my plight. "You must understand our point of view." one of them said. "We have no way out. It's unfortunate that we have to do this, but we must protect ourselves as well."

I tried to bargain with them; I asked if it were possible for me to stay in the ghetto another eight days. They refused my request. In despair, I offered another proposal. Could I remain in my cell a few days longer? This too was refused me.

In utter misery I shrugged my shoulders and said, "What can I do? Lead me to the gate and I promise that I will not get you into any trouble."

I did, however, have an opportunity to say goodbye to the Meier family and to thank them for all they had done for me. The young wife tried to cheer me up by telling me that I might manage to get away safely. But now another problem came up.

I was scheduled to board a train and leave the ghetto, but as Jews were not permitted to ride the trains, no one knew the railroad schedule. Finally, a member of the Jewish Council learned that two trains left the station daily: One at 6:30 A.M., the other at about 4 P.M. It was now too late for the afternoon train, and old Isaac Meier asked the Council leaders to allow me to remain until 5 o'clock the next morning. They agreed.

The next morning I prepared for my trip by taking my

armband off in the hope that I would be accepted as an Aryan. I reached the station a little after 6 A.M. and asked the girl in the ticket booth for a ticket to Drohobycz. Briskly, she told me that she had no more seat tickets and abruptly slammed the window shut. I was thunderstruck. I had never heard of special tickets. Again, I felt trapped and was certain that I would not emerge alive from this adventure.

As I stepped away from the window, a ragged youngster approached me and asked in a high voice, "Where do you want to go, sir?"

"It's none of your business," I snapped.

But the boy was persistent. "I only want to sell you a ticket for a reserved seat to Stryj, which is near Drohobycz."

How clever, I thought. So that's how the boys make extra money. I paid him whatever he asked and he whispered to me, "I know who you are, but I won't denounce you." And he disappeared.

I found a seat in the train which was full of Poles and Ukrainians who, if they could but recognize me, would have turned me in. Luckily, I was not approached by anyone, and as I sat in my seat nervously, I managed to work myself into a happy mood by the time the train reached Stryj.

As the train pulled into Stryj, nearly all the passengers got off. I didn't want to be the first to leave and peeked through the window to see who was on the station. When I noticed German policemen and railway guards and observed how they were examining documents, my heart fluttered uneasily. I had not thought that the Germans would be so careful in their examinations. I could not decide what to do, and then fate played a hand in my decision. The train began to move again in the direction of Drohobycz, and I realized that I would have to jump if I wanted to get off now.

I remained frozen where I was, even though I had a ticket only to Stryj. It was three more stations to Drohobycz, and in another forty minutes we arrived.

Because of the fact that there were policemen here too, I jumped out of the train from the opposite side to avoid them. I came upon a small group of Jewish workers who were loading lumber from a truck into a freight car. I rushed up to them and said, in a trembling voice, "Jews, *Ivri Anochi,* I am one of you. I've just come from Lemberg. How can I get into town?"

One of them replied, "Quick! Get your armband on or they'll kill you." I began to work and when it grew dark, I marched with them into the ghetto.

I was safe again. Here I found my brother, many of my friends and acquaintances and I told them of what had happened to me during the past weeks. I told them what the Germans were doing at Janover and how they were trying to liquidate the entire Jewish population. Although everything I said to them was true, even I could not anticipate how much more suffering faced me. Even as I lie here and write these words, I can scarcely realize how much misery faced me in the future.

Drohobycz

Drohobycz was the center of the naphtha industry in East Galicia. The Russians had gained control of it at the outbreak of the German-Polish war in 1939. When the Germans invaded Russia in 1941, they occupied Drohobycz, where more than 16,000 Jews lived in comparative comfort. Until the Germans came, the Ukrainians had not indulged in any pogroms because there were so many Jews that it was dangerous for them to invite unnecessary trouble. The Ukrainians who lived in the area welcomed the Germans with great joy; however, the Jews were tense when the district changed hands. During the celebrations, a rumor was started that many imprisoned Ukrainians had been shot by the departing Russians. It later developed that the victims were Zionists, including such leaders as Dr. Nacht and Dr. Adelsberg. But at this time the Ukrainians thought that their own people had been massacred and they started a pogrom against the Jews during which thirty-six innocent human beings were killed.

A few days later the Gestapo came to town and began to persecute the Jews. They were responsible for the arrest

and disappearance of hundreds of Jews who vanished and were never seen again. The entire Jewish population lived in a state of fear. They realized that they were without protection and that their enemies were in complete control of the situation. Women anxiously sat at their windows waiting with great uncertainty for the return of their husbands who had been driven to work by the Germans in the morning. The men, on the other hand, were wracked at the terrible thought that when they came home in the evening, their wives and children would be gone.

The Jewish Council in the town consisted of the following members, among others: Dr. Rosenblatt, Dr. Ruhrberg, Dr. Pomeranz, Dr. Gerstenfeld, Dr. Margulies, Dr. Rudorfer, Dr. Barchatsch and Dr. Bernfeld. Dr. Schmeer and Dr. Frommer, original members of the group, had quit, after a fight with the others. In the beginning, the Council held its sessions in the home of the aged and later, in a Talmud Torah building. Dr. Rosenblatt was Chairman of the Council, and Dr. M. Ruhrberg was his Deputy.

A few days after the establishment of the Council, the Security Police, the Sipo, (actually the Gestapo) proved, by their actions, that they did not take the council seriously. A week after the Council was organized, it sent to the Security Police, forty men to help transport furniture. Soon after the men began to work, they were subjected to beatings by the Security Police, and the Group Leader of the Police, Felix Landau, complained to the Council that some of the men had refused to listen to orders. Landau asked for the names of these men but the Council refused to identify them. He immediately demonstrated his disregard of the Council by executing thirty of them, including Dr. Barchatsch, one of its members.

The chief German officer was Nikolaus Tolle, and Dr. Ruhrberg tried to bribe Tolle in the hope that he could get the German to treat the Jews more kindly. Tolle and his

henchmen gladly accepted the bribes from Dr. Ruhrberg and, as a result, the situation of the Jews did not worsen.

The Jews became aware that in order to survive, they had to bribe the Germans. So long as they had valuables to give up, they thought they could buy some security. Gradually, the Germans demanded of the Jews textiles for suits, coats and dresses; butter, eggs, silverware, coffee, tea, and scores of other items and material goods. This "business" flourished so greatly that the Council established a special purchasing office so that it could comply with the demands of the Nazis. This office was managed by three distinguished Jews in the ghetto, Samuel Rothenberg, Nachum Petranker and Moses Kartin. Nevertheless, security was not assured—and it did not come.

The Council also established workshops for shoemakers, tailors, furriers, and other craftsmen who were forced to work twelve hours a day, so that they could fill the German orders.

Every German who came to the Council knew that he could have anything he asked for, and the members of the Security Police insisted that everything be of the highest and finest quality. Even the gardens of the Germans were cared for by the Jews. Some top officials confiscated villas and the Council supplied them with gardeners who worked with great imagination to create fantastic landscaping marvels.

Hermann Goering had once said that all German industry must be geared for war production and that all other elements of the economy would have to suffer. Now, however, with the help of Jewish labor, the Germans were managing to obtain comforts and luxuries that they would otherwise have to do without. As far as I knew, the Council never disappointed the Germans and carried out every order promptly.

Naturally, the Jews lived in mortal fear and there are

instances I still remember which illustrate what I mean.

There was the case concerning the horsewhip with a silver handle. It had been ordered by the Germans of the Security Police, but no one could make it nor knew where to buy it. Scores of people were sent scurrying about to solve the problem of the horsewhip. The deadline for its delivery passed and when one of the Security Police angrily asked for it, all the Jews were put in deadly fear. They wondered whether the Germans would come into the ghetto and indiscriminately shoot down innocent Jews. They didn't, but the anxiety remained alive.

Another German, to whom crossword puzzles were an obsession, could not solve a particular puzzle as one word eluded him. Every now and again, he would telephone the Council demanding that it supply him with the proper word. Each demand was accompanied by a threat. Once he needed a five-letter word for an extinct tribe; another time he needed a three-letter Turkish word; once he wanted to know a three-letter word for a particular species of antelope. It sounds incredible, but it happened. Because there were many well educated and intelligent men in the Jewish Council, they were able to supply the words he needed. They used maps, dictionaries and many reference books to help him.

One day, he came to us with a query which puzzled the Council. He wanted to know a ten-letter word for "teacher." He demanded a reply in fifteen minutes. At first, the request was not taken too seriously. It was turned over to a group of men who worked in the Judenrat on these problems and then it was forgotten, but after no answer was given within fifteen minutes, the Council members grew uneasy. Dr. Ruhrberg was asked to do something about the matter. He called the German, asking him to wait ten minutes longer. The German told him that if the Jews could not come up with the proper word, he himself would take the conse-

quences. It was quite clear that this meant that Dr. Ruhrberg was in danger, and that the other Council members were in equal peril.

Panic struck. Some officials fled the office; others hid in the loft and in the cellar. This, on top of the failure to supply the horsewhip, led the Jews to believe that they would all be liquidated.

Dr. Ruhrberg rushed about offering gifts, and loaves of bread to anyone who could come up with the proper word. Dozens of men set to work on the problem, but they were unable to think of the correct word. Dr. Ruhrberg slowly sat down in his office to await the German, hoping he could placate him with a substitute gift.

A young girl, who was waiting to talk to Dr. Ruhrberg, overheard the problem and cried out, "Perhaps the word *Schullehrer* (instructor) fits." Hopefully, everyone began to count the letters in the word. If the "ch" or the double "l" could be counted as a single letter, it would fit!

Dr. Ruhrberg immediately telephoned the German and gave him the missing word and anxiously waited to see if it was right for the puzzle. An hour later, it was apparent that the danger was over.

In a few days, the Council managed to find a horsewhip with a silver handle which was owned by a Polish landlord in the Drohobycz area. They bought it from him and a second crisis was avoided.

A major problem to the Jewish Council was the supplying of pornographic literature and pictures which the German police were constantly ordering. As the books the Germans demanded had to be written in the German language, the Jews had to send for them. In addition, they were very expensive. Yet, somehow, no matter how peculiar and outlandish the request, the Council managed to comply with them. Dr. Ruhrberg was ingenious and imaginative. He kept the Jews safe through his ability to come up with

whatever was asked of him.

In spite of all the effort taken to save Jewish lives, there were constant and brutal killings. The case of a man named Fliegner is an illustration in point. He was working in the gardens of the SS man, Felix Landau,* on 12 Jana Street, paying attention to his chores, minding his own business, when Landau saw him. At that moment the German was entertaining his mistress, Trude Segall, and she decided to test her accuracy with a pistol.

She shot at Fliegner a number of times but missed him. Laughing gleefully, Landau grabbed the pistol from her and shot Fliegner through the head.

The next day, when Dr. Ruhrberg asked Landau why he had killed the harmless Jew, the Nazi replied, "Why not? Others are killing thousands of Jews. Can't I shoot at least one?"

Another incident which is etched sharply on my mind is the murder of three teen-age girls, Sternbach, Kupferberg and Zuckerman. The pretty and lively youngsters were used as brick-layers helpers and were joking with one another as they went about their work. A Gestapo officer named Guenther came near them, stood a while and observed them as they labored and then took out a gun and, for no reason at all, shot them dead. One of the girls' father, Kupferberg, was a barber who used to serve Guenther, the Gestapo beast. After shooting the three girls, Guenther went home and sent for Kupferberg because he wanted a shave. When the Jew finished with his task, Guenther looked at him and said, "Kupferberg, a half hour ago, I shot your daughter." Kupferberg fainted.

Such cases can be multiplied again and again. In Boryslav, 700 Jews who had gathered in the woods to pray, were murdered by the Nazis. At Turka-on-Stryi, 300 Jews were

*Landau had received from Hitler the Blutsorden Medal as one of the assassins of the Austrian Chancellor, Dr. Dolfuss.

killed. There, Germans had entered the town, knocked at doors, and asked where Jews lived. When the desired answer was received, they simply proceeded to shoot every Jew in sight.

On one particular day, 1,100 Jews in Stryj were rounded up and jailed. Dr. Ruhrberg and an engineer named Naftali Backenroth, worked heroically to save them. In spite of their efforts, they could help only 250 of them. The remaining 850 were shipped to another area and shot.

In November, 1941 and later in March, August and October of 1942, the Germans took violent action against the Jews in Drohobycz. The representative of the Jewish "Arbeitsamt" at the Drohobycz office was Mr. Liebermann, who was empowered to issue certificates of invalidism to Jews who were too sick to work. At the end of November, 1941, all Jews who were too sick to work, and who possessed such certificates were ordered to report to the Drohobycz office. As a result, more than 300 Jews jammed their way into the office building and courtyard. Suddenly, German trucks filled with Security Police rambled up to the office, forced the Jews into the trucks, drove them to the nearby village of Bronica and executed them.

Four months later, in mid-March, the Jews realized how dangerous the situation had become. The leaders of the Jewish Council were contacted by the Chief of the Drohobycz Security Police, who informed them that farmhands were needed for work in Wolhynia and Podolia. This meant that 1,000 Jews would have to be evacuated from Drohobycz, and prepare for a three-day march to their destination. This to some was an opportunity to improve their situation, for they believed it was better to live in fertile farm areas than in overcrowded ghettos.

The Jewish Council, which was charged with the responsibility of selecting the 1,000 Jews, announced that they would welcome volunteers. Although many signed up to

leave, there weren't enough to fill the quota. As a result, the Council selected dozens of thieves and informers for the trip, thereby doing their duty and ridding the area of undesirable elements.

Weeks passed without a word. After a month of silence, the leaders of the Jewish Council asked the Chief of the Security Police if there was anything wrong with the mail, as none of the Jews had received any letters from those who left. The Chief laughed loudly and heartily, "How stupid can you be? For more than 1,000 years people believed that you Jews are smart. Can't you guess what happened to them?"

In July of 1942, four months after this debacle, the Germans went to work on the children of the area. A special kitchen had been established for them by the Jewish Council. The Gestapo Commissioner, a man named Haeckel, had often assured Dr. Ruhrberg that the Germans would not bother the youngsters when they came to eat. But one day, when hundreds of them were gathered in the kitchen, groups of German Police entered the area, grabbed dozens of helpless, crying children, and threw them on the trucks. Some managed to escape, but unfortunately they were not to be free for long, as the Nazis diabolically hunted them down, managing to kill 150.

During this period, the parents of the children lived in great anxiety, while waiting to see if any had survived. There were heartbreaking scenes in town when the lucky youngsters who lived through this pogrom returned and were recognized and embraced by their parents.

In August and October, the Nazis instituted new pogroms, but the Jews of Drohobycz were luckier than those in the other Galician towns. In other areas, the Germans wiped out one-half of the Jewish population; in Drohobycz "only" one-fourth of the Jews, or 4,000 were butchered.

Dr. Ruhrberg and Naftali Backenroth played a key role in saving Jewish lives at this time.

The Jewish Council had been founded by the Germans not to help the Jews but to serve German interests. Nevertheless, the Council members managed, through their operations, to aid their fellow Jews.

In spite of the fact that the Germans had been poisoned by anti-Semitism, they were willing to deal with the Jews in order to advance their own interests. Even though the various Jewish Council members in separate towns were not permitted to socialize with one another, they managed nonetheless to discover exactly how the Germans had to be handled in order to aid Jewish survival. This period of relative calm existed only through the first half of 1942. After that time, the Jewish Council lost its influence with the Germans and lent itself as an instrument of torture in the hangman's hands.

If someone will read these words eventually, it should be made known that none of the members of the Jewish Council would, under normal conditions, ever be elected as a Jewish representative. In the main, these were wicked, corrupt men who took no cognizance of the bitter situation in which their fellow Jews lived. If, by accident, one or two of them were more sensitive than the others, they changed for the worse within a week or two. If they did anything at all for their fellow Jews, it was not done out of the goodness of their hearts but because of self-interest; they may have wanted to do something to indicate that they really represented the Jews, or they wanted to collect money from the Jews and work out some arrangement of moral credit for themselves, should they survive the war—and some of them were confident that they would survive.

The Jewish Police were more pliable and worse than the

Polish-Jewish writer, Professor Bruno Schultz. The pride of the Jews of Drohobycz and of all Galicia, Professor Schulz was not only a writer and a poet but a talented painter. Ironically, he had painted portraits of the sweethearts of Council. They did nothing to help their fellow Jews, although they did try to save their own relatives. They attempted to hold on to their valuables and bribe their way out of danger. Their record was a disgraceful one.

In the ghettos, Jews were busy making hiding places for themselves and many of them camouflaged entrances to cellars and lofts. They expected the worst to happen.

On November 4, 1942, the Germans went into action, and the Jews scurried into their carefully prepared hiding places. During the first few days, the Germans managed to find only a few dozen Jews. They were so angry and frustrated they thought of bombarding the ghetto with artillery, thus forcing the Jews to leave their hiding places. There was even talk of sending tanks into the ghetto, but it never materialized.

And then, the Jewish Police proposed to carry out the arrests themselves. The Germans gladly agreed and the "November Action" began.

The Jewish Police at first arrested only the older people. It was a cold, wintry month and it was expected that the old folks would not long survive; certainly they would not live through the war. In this fashion, at least the lives of the young people could be saved. Naturally, the old folks felt that they had been betrayed. They were right, but there was nothing anyone could do about it.

The prisoners were moved into a large building called the Komarner Synagogue. The windows were barred and the doors bolted. German police and Ukrainian militia guarded the area, thus the ancient House of Worship had become a prison.

For more than three weeks the Jewish Police rushed

about the Jewish quarter with axes and mattocks, searching for Jews. Doors were smashed, floor planks uprooted and hundreds of elderly Jews were discovered and arrested.

As I write these lines, I don't know how people will think about this event in the future. Will they believe it was especially cruel to single out the old people? But the saddest thing of all is that the Jewish Police were so willing to help the Germans and do all the dirty work.

Then one day, typhoid fever broke out in the Komarner Synagogue. Hundreds of Jews died like flies. This matter was particularly bothersome for the Jewish Police who had to supply a new quota of Jews to replace the dead. The more Jews they brought in, the more deaths there were.

At first, the prisoners had received bread and soup twice daily, which was brought from the Jewish kitchens. Also, the latrines were cleaned regularly. When anyone died, the corpses were immediately transported to the cemetery. But after the outbreak of typhoid, nobody wanted to take the chance of bringing food to the area; the prisoners were no longer led to the latrines and the dead were no longer isolated from them. The dead lay in heaps, in the mud. The stench was horrible and lice and fever abounded. Many of the prisoners went mad. Day and night one heard crying and moaning. Some of those who lost their minds stripped themselves of their clothing and danced wildly in the knee-deep mud.

Edward Galotti, the Chief of the Jewish Police in Drohobycz and the only decent Jewish policeman whom I knew, was in charge of providing the necessary Jewish quota and lost control of the situation. He asked the Gestapo to do something about it but the Germans were not interested in cooperating with him. To them, this was the easiest and cheapest mass liquidation of the Jews. Some of them even enjoyed it and came in droves to the area to see the mad Jews dancing about. The Gestapo man Gildner was cruel

enough to bring his children to see the "spectacle."

After three weeks, the Jewish Council and the Jewish Police decided to run the risk of refusing to cooperate with the Germans any longer. They realized that tanks and grenades were less painful than slow torture. The Germans, violently angry at this turn of events, invaded the ghetto, captured thousands of Jews and placed them in boxcars scheduled to go to Lemberg. Among the thousands of Jews who died in this fashion was Leo Spanndoerfer, who was, for many years, one of the leaders of the Jewish community in Drohobycz.

This same tragedy was repeated in the surrounding communities, as the Germans went wild and massacred all the Jews they could get their hands on.

Thursday, November 19, 1942 was one of the blackest days of this terrible period. One of the Gestapo men, named Huebner, was friendly with Max Reiner, a Jewish druggist's assistant. A month earlier, Reiner had lost his wife, child and parents. It was obvious that Huebner had not been able to help him. Reiner, terribly upset by the tragedy, was no longer seen with Huebner.

The tension between the two men grew in intensity. Then on the morning of November 19, they met in the chemist's shop. They quarrelled. Suddenly Huebner drew his pistol and killed Reiner.

Huebner, aroused and bloodthirsty, quickly called a few Gestapo men to his side and with them invaded the office of the Jewish Council, shooting down everyone in sight. They then proceeded to enter the ghetto and thus began the day which was later called "Bloody Thursday."

The Germans stood at the corners of the Jewish quarter and shot down everyone who happened to come along. At that moment, traffic was heavy in the area and soon there was a heap of corpses piled in each ghetto lane.

In mid-afternoon, their gory work finished, the mass murderers whistled gaily, returned to the Jewish Council offices and demanded that they be served brandy.

Among the victims of these madmen was the noted many of the Germans and had otherwise busied himself with harmless work.

The Germans liked Professor Schulz, but he was unfortunate enough to have been walking through the ghetto at that time to visit his old mother. She lived in a ghetto hideout and he was bringing her some food As he neared the ghetto, Professor Schulz was approached by Guenther, who shot down the Jew. Dr. Ruhrberg, looking down from his window, saw the entire scene and was helpless in the tragic situation.

A few days later, we heard that in Lemberg there had been a similar mass killing. We also learned, when we saw Huebner walking around with a bandage on his hand, that Reiner had stabbed him with a knife before he was shot down.

Despair in the Jewish Quarter

As the murders continued, despair gripped the entire Jewish population, and in the early days of December, we were driven to panic time and again. It began on December 7, 1942, when the entire Jewish Council, including Dr. Ruhrberg, suddenly disappeared. The only exception was Dr. Gerstenfeld. The others had the money they needed in order to help them escape; only Dr. Gerstenfeld, shy and fearful, was unable to obtain enough money to get away. He came to the Council office as usual on the morning of December 8, and found none of his colleagues there. The safe had been ransacked and contained only a torn five zloty note. Dr. Gerstenfeld looked about in shocked amazement. The whole world seemed to have crashed down on him. In a few moments, Gestapo officers rushed into the office and demanded an explanation as to what had happened. Finally they were convinced that he had nothing to do with planning the escape and immediately named him Chairman of the Council, ordering him to appoint new members as soon as possible.

When we heard what had happened, we were all embittered and certain that our final liquidation was at hand. Rumors abounded that we were to be killed immediately.

We heard that we would be tortured. The stories grew more terrible with each telling, but meanwhile we waited.

At Drohobycz there were three groups of workers. The first unit of armament workers, wearing an "R" sign, labored mainly in the naphtha refineries. They had been organized in a group called "Beskiden." The R stood for Ruestungs-arbeiter.

The second group, working for army establishments, wore a "W" sign. The W stood for Wehrmachstbetrieb. The workers were kept busy in sawing mills and municipal workshops.

The third group wore no signs at all. They were on call by the Gestapo and were led by the engineer Backenroth. A fourth group was later established and forced to labor in the ceramic works.

When the rumors began as to who would be murdered and who would not, we understood that the only Jews to be spared would be those bearing the R and W signs. The Beskiden management arranged for housing for its workers. They took over a group of Jewish-owned homes, situated on a section of Jagielonska Street and the Sadigurer Synagogue. This unit of houses was surrounded by a high wall. The workers were placed here and were guarded by the Jewish Police.

R and W workers were considered to be SS property. Money was paid to the SS at a daily rate of five zloties for a man and four zloties for a woman. The laborers were "fed" by the camp administration. The meals were skimpy indeed, consisting of a weekly allotment of soup and bread. The SS was charged for this food at a cost of 1.40 zloties per day. At this rate the net profit to the SS was 3.60 zloties for a man and 2.60 zloties for a woman.

When the workers moved from the ghetto to the barracks, most of them took their families and managed to hide them in lofts or in cellars. In this fashion, each camp barracks

became a ghetto in miniature.

The people who had to remain in the ghetto were now lonelier than ever and in their despair there followed a wave of suicides. If they had enough money to buy it, the victims used potassium cyanide. There was also a market on this poison. Prices rose before an action and declined after the action.

A tube of this poison cost from 800 to 1,000 zloties. Those who could not afford the cyanide, gassed themselves to death. And those who were even too poor to obtain gas, hanged themselves.

Suicide became an obsession and it was discussed frequently and normally by everyone. One could often hear men and women talking in the streets and saying, "Today I will finish it all. I'll kill myself and my family." Nobody tried to talk anybody out of killing himself. Death lived with them constantly. This included the young folks as well as the old people.

Yet there were some men and women who had the courage to live and to think of eventual escape. Two conditions were to be fulfilled for this attitude: one had to have money and look like an Aryan.

There were two outlets for escape: one had to obtain forged papers in order to pass as Aryans or one could hide in the dwellings of non-Jews. A few tried to cross the Carpathian border and enter Hungary. Others attempted to build permanent subterranean hideouts.

Trading for forged Aryan papers became a major activity. Some Jews, who had connections with Catholic priests, were provided with certificates of baptism. Forged papers became an industry and many Jews were able to escape once they had them.

Nevertheless, escape from the ghetto was no guarantee of safety. We later learned that many who had managed to get out were hunted down and murdered on the outside.

When the Reich identity cards were instituted, it became necessary for one to prove in six different ways that he was of Aryan descent. He needed two certificates for his parents and four for his grandparents.

In every town there were extortioners who took the last money from Jews, assuring them that they would help them to escape. But later the extortioners would deliver the Jews to the Gestapo. In this way, they earned money from two sources and became rich in the process.

The Jews who managed to hide in Polish or Ukrainian dwellings suffered even more than those who tried to escape. The Poles and Ukrainians would trick the Jews out of all their money and valuables and then turn them over to the Police. Then, the Jews would be executed either on the spot or in the woods. The Jewish Council would then be ordered to bury the victims in the Jewish cemetery.

The Jews who planned to cross the border into Hungary also had their troubles. Normally, getting across the border would not have been difficult, for the towns of Drohobycz, Sambor and Stryj were only some 80 to 100 kilometers from the border. But the Jews were not familiar with the thick Carpathian forests and were dependent upon guides to lead them. More often than not, the guides betrayed them and the Jews would suddenly find themselves in the middle of the dark woods confronted by armed peasants, who killed them without pity.

Later, the Jews grew wiser and marched in armed groups. In most cases, they were defeated by the peasants who outnumbered them. Those who survived the shootings were marched back to the ghettos, depressed and heartbroken.

On the other hand, even the handful who crossed the border successfully were faced with major obstacles. The Hungarian authorities had forbidden anyone to shelter strangers. As a result, the Jews who managed to reach Hungary stumbled about aimlessly until they were picked

up by Hungarian police who returned them to the German Police, and all of them were shot on the border between Hungary and occupied Poland, called the "General Government."

These experiences led the Jews to trust no one. They learned to rely upon themselves alone. At great expense and under extreme secrecy, many of them managed to build comfortable hiding places with electric or gas lights, water and fresh air supplies, radios and sufficient food stores. The hideouts were well camouflaged.

Although it is not easy for me to write in this condition, I must say a few words about Dr. Maurice Ruhrberg upon whom thousands upon thousands of Jews in Drohobycz and in the area looked upon as their leader from the first day of the German occupation until December, 1942, when he escaped from the ghetto. He was called Maciek, the name his parents and close friends gave him. His father had been Wilhelm Ruhrberg, the chairman of the Jewish community for many years. Maciek was given a good education and, after gaining his degree, was sent to Trieste to study economics, where he earned his doctorate in this specialty. When Maciek returned to Poland and became aware that his degree could not help him earn his livelihood, he studied Law, and although he received his Master of Law degree, he did not get very far in the profession. For years he worked as a legal assistant and even when he went out on his own, he did not do too well. Thus, he disappointed his parents who held great hopes for him.

Thanks to his parents' connections, Maciek got a job as a reporter for the *Chwila*, a Zionist newspaper in Lemberg, but here, too, he did not establish himself as outstanding. He made more money by keeping certain scandalous items out of the newspaper rather than reporting them. He probably would have managed somehow through journalism

and the law had not the German-Russian war exploded in June, 1941. This event changed his life, as well as the lives of millions of others.

From the very outset, Dr. Ruhrberg, who had joined the Jewish Council, knew how to handle the German authorities. He knew how to bribe them, how to juggle presents, giving, first, a certain item to one man, and then, another to a second. He had to keep these gifts secret for one German was not to know what his fellow German was getting. And unlike other Jews who dealt with the Germans, Dr. Ruhrberg spoke to the Nazis with dignity and was always proud, and not humble. He had the aristocratic touch and feeling. He was courteous and affable and he helped the Jewish people whom he wanted to serve. To him, there were two groups of Jews: those of Drohobycz and those outside the area. He was interested only in "his" Jews, and was willing to sacrifice four Jews from outside Drohobycz to save a Drohobycz Jew.

When Dr. Ruhrberg negotiated with the Germans on how many Jews were to be killed, he always attempted to persuade the murderers to take the Jews from outside his area. If he was called upon to intervene on behalf of the Jews, he took money for every little favor he bestowed. If he received no payment, he could be quite indifferent to the destruction of an entire Jewish village.

On the whole, it can be said that he was the right man in the right place at the right time—except that later on he began to believe that he was a great Jewish diplomat or statesman or Prince in Israel. Drunk with his illusory power, he was unable, because of this feeling, to see the realities of the life surounding him. He could no longer realize that the Jews were in grave danger, the gravest in their entire history. He could not believe that the conditions under which the Jews lived might be less than permanent, that this was a temporary condition. He persuaded himself

that life would continue this way forever and that he would always play the role of the great Jewish ruler and that all would have to bow before him.

When he fled Drohobycz, in December, 1942, he acted as though he were an abdicating monarch who was convinced that one day he would be recalled with joy by the populace. He took pompous leave of the Jews, making solemn speeches and leaving the quarter through a lane formed in military fashion by the Jewish Police.

His escape was not a sudden one. He had spoken of it freely with his fellow Jews. He had said that sooner or later the Gestapo killed everyone who bribed them. Still, when he escaped, many Jews were terribly upset and a wave of suicides followed in the ghetto.

Dr. Ruhrberg, his wife and some of his friends, left in an automobile and drove into the Carpathian Mountains in the direction of Maidan, where, between high mountains and thick woods, he had built a hiding place for his family, a comfortable one, with plenty of food. But as soon as his group arrived in the mountains, they were traced there by the Germans and had to flee again. He got to Boryslaw and stayed there for a spell. Then he managed to obtain forged Aryan papers for himself and his wife and drove to Warsaw. He lived there for six months, until his landlord became suspicious and reported him to the police. He was arrested and after three weeks of investigation, he told the Germans all they wanted to know. The Gestapo in Drohobycz was informed of his capture. He and his wife were brought back to Drohobycz and shot in the courtyard of Gestapo headquarters in Drohobycz.

While it must be admitted that Dr. Ruhrberg was egocentric and that he sought power, even as he helped his people, Naftali Backenroth, the second great personality of Drohobycz, was rather a different kind of man.

About this noble man, I will write later.

My Start in Drohobycz

My joy at having escaped from Janover Camp was not to last. As soon as I arrived at the Drohobycz ghetto, I immediately recognized that I was in for a nightmarish experience, for it was the time of the end of the "November Action."

Those who were unemployed—like my brother and myself—had to watch out. When I wanted to meet my relatives who were still alive, I had to sneak to their hideouts under cover of night through the back lanes of the ghetto and take my chances in spite of the curfew. Hiding in these miserable hovels were men who had been rich and influential in former days. They had possessed fine homes and had employed hundreds of workers and craftsmen. Now they were squatting in wretched cellars, in constant danger and fearful of losing their lives.

One day, my brother and I decided to visit a Jewish family in the neighboring village of Rolow where we thought it would be easier for us to work. Although the Security Police had confiscated all the houses and surrounding land in the village, there were still a handful of Jews permitted to live there.

When we managed to reach the Lorberbaums, we discovered that there were three other families, originally from Drohobycz, living with them—the Kamermanns and the Richters and the Teppers.

One of the German policemen, a Volksdeutch named Fleischer, was one of a group in charge of the property confiscated by the Germans, and because he himself came from a poor family, it was not difficult for the Jews to keep him in good humor by constantly offering him presents. Every two or three days he came to the farm, sat down on a bench and said nothing. But the Jews knew what he wanted. Soon they brought him presents, which he took quietly and left.

Kamermann and I became friendly during our brief stay and he confided some of his secrets to me. He told me that he had an old friend in the village, a Ukrainian named Parashtchak, who had built a large cellar under his house and offered to hide the three families there for the duration of the war. Although he made this offer out of the goodness of his heart, and not for the sake of profit, the three families offered him whatever money and valuables they possessed. But this good peasant refused to take anything from them. He said that all the villagers would become his enemies if he suddenly became rich.

Parashtschak had worked day and night to build his cellar hideout and all the members of the three Jewish families pitched in to help him. They expected to move in within the next three weeks, and Kamermann wanted my brother and myself to join him. He stressed that I wouldn't have to give anything to anybody and I felt that it was generous of him. He told me that the cellar was stored with 2,500 pounds of flour and fat, besides other food that had already been brought there. He even managed to bring in soap, toothpaste and matches as well as medicine. But he

set one condition: that I would keep a record of all the events that transpired during the German occupation, so that the world would eventually know what we had lived through.

Now, as I write under most uncomfortable conditions, setting down my experiences on paper, I suspect that the inspiration for putting down my story came from Kamermann.

In order to appreciate the unselfish proposal of Kamermann, it would be necessary for one to have lived through the German persecutions. Naturally, I accepted his offer with great joy. He was so generous that he even refused to accept any money I wanted to give to the peasant. He reminded me that conditions after the war would be uncertain and that as I was not a businessman, I would need the money for myself.

In the face of this pleasant turn, we were terribly shocked when we learned that the peasant was unwilling to allow us to live in the cellar, even though the three families urged him to permit us to live with them. What would it matter to Parashtschak that two more people would join thirteen? Yet he could not be moved. He said that he was willing to help his friends, not strangers.

To tell the truth, I did not like the peasant from the first moment I set sight on him. His eyes were cold and cruel. I had always imagined that a man who wanted to save human lives would have a kindly look. I told Kamermann that I mistrusted the peasant, but he laughed at me and said, "If I can succeed in persuading him to take you in, I'm sure you'll be able to survive the war. He's a very reliable person." He added that the village of Rolow was an ideal hiding place as there were no persecutions or air raids.

Early in December, all Jews working in the villages surrounding Drohobycz were ordered to move into the

Jewish quarter of Drohobycz, and so, with a heavy heart, I prepared to leave Rolow. Before I left, Kamermann assured me that he would talk to Parashtchak again and there would still be a possibility for my brother and me to return to Rolow.

We drove back to Drohobycz during the night. As we traveled, I reflected on the lost opportunity to hide safely for the duration of the war. And as I realized how much more pleasant Rolow was than Drohobycz, I devoutly wished that all would turn out well in the end and that finally I would be accepted by Parashtchak.

Three weeks later the German Police reported to the Jewish Council at Drohobycz that there were several corpses lying in the woods between Rolow and Gaje. When the bodies were brought in—thirteen, including men, women and children—it was discovered that they were the Kamermanns, Richters and Teppers. We also learned that all thirteen had been shot to death by Parashtchak and Fleischer.

It was at this terrible moment that I recalled the wise words of Rabbi Mendele of Kotzk. On the Sabbath before the New Moon, we Jews pray: "Fulfill, O Lord, our heart's wishes for the best." The Rabbi explained why the words "for the best" were used. After all, can a man wish for evil? And he said that man cannot know if his wishes will lead to good or evil, for many wishes lead man to destruction. This is why the words "for the best" are used. It means that God should protect man when he makes a wish and that when he asks for a favor, it should end up well.

I remembered this parable as I stood at the cemetery looking down at the dead face of Kamermann. It had been my greatest wish to remain in Rolow with him, and now he was dead. Even now it is unclear to me why Parashtchak had not wanted my brother and me. Perhaps he did not

think we were worth his bullets. Perhaps he had been afraid to have to deal with an additional two young men.

Upon our return to Drohobycz, we realized that the plight of the Jews had become more desperate than ever. There were regular roundups of victims and the Germans continued to kill Jews with pitiless regularity. The fact that Dr. Ruhrberg and the Council had fled made life even more difficult for those who remained. Attempts to escape became more frequent and many of those who were unable to get away killed themselves.

One particular episode in the wave of suicides was especially shocking. It concerned two families living together in one room. The Hausmanns were old and childless; the Birnbaums, whom I knew from my home town, had two children.

One day I heard moaning and crying from their room. I ran to see what had happened. At the threshold of the room I saw Mrs. Birnbaum and her 11-year-old son Janek lying dead on the sofa. The Hausmanns stood there looking down at them, wailing loudly.

Although I was upset by the scene, I was rather surprised that the Hausmanns mourned so deeply; after all, suicide was so common.

I asked them why they were reacting so strongly to the death of the woman and her son. The Hausmanns said that the Birnbaums had taken the cyanide that they themselves had been planning to use.

"It was *our* poison," I was told. This is why they were so stirred by the deaths. They had saved their money laboriously to buy the poison which was apparently found by Mrs. Birnbaum, who utilized it, so to speak, freely.

I sat down and thought about this miserable situation. Had there ever been a time when people fought with each other for the privilege of committing suicide? Had there ever been an occasion when people stole poison from each other?

The old folks complained to me, "What can we do now with the poison?" At this point, Mr. Elias Birnbaum entered the room. Before seeing the corpses on the sofa, he sympathetically asked why the Hausmanns were crying. When no answer was received, he looked around the room and saw his wife and child. His face turned white and he tip-toed to the sofa and looked at his family, asking, "When did this happen?" Nobody knew. He cried, "Why didn't she say anything about this to me! With what did she kill herself?" The Hausmanns burst into tears again and replied, "With our cyanide! She did it with our poison!"

Birnbaum silently sat down. I interjected, "Please don't cry. Birnbaum will get you two portions of cyanide within the next few days."

"From whom will he get it? The chemist fled from the ghetto and now it's impossible to get any."

As we talked, Birnbaum's daughter entered. She had heard about the suicide and rushed into the room where her mother and brother both lay, kissed and embraced them violently, pulled out a knife and tried to kill herself. We wrestled the knife from her grasp, and when she heard that her mother and brother obtained the poison from the Hausmanns, she wanted to kill them. Birnbaum and I had a difficult job on our hands restraining her. That night the Hausmanns slept elsewhere as they were afraid of the girl. And when the Jewish Council undertakers came to take the bodies, the girl tried to prevent them from doing so.

This was the situation in the ghetto during December, the last month of 1942. We had reached the nadir of our despair. Every Jew was now interested only in himself and refused to do anything for his neighbor.

Meanwhile, the Aryans, Ukrainians and Poles, looked forward to stealing whatever possessions we still had. From the neighboring villages, hundreds of peasants came to town expecting to load their carts with everything we would

presumably leave behind if sent to our deaths.

Then suddenly, events took a turn for the better. Late in December of 1942, the Americans landed in Africa and occupied French Morocco and Algiers. The Germans were retreating from all fronts, deserting Libya and withdrawing to Tunisia. The Italians were weakening in Africa and the German armies were being surrounded at Stalingrad. Elsewhere on the Eastern Front, Hitler's armies were tasting defeat after defeat.

One afternoon, Naftali Backenroth rushed into the ghetto crying out in a loud voice that we would be saved; that we could emerge from our hiding places as he had heard from a reliable source that the ghetto would not be liquidated.

Apparently this information had seeped down to him and now to us. Gradually, Jews began to slip in to the ghetto from their hiding places. Also returning were those who had managed to find refuge with peasants. Every day we saw old familiar faces and joyfully embraced friends whom we had thought long dead. The price for poisons dropped as no one was interested in killing himself. We now felt sorry for those Jews who had committed suicide.

On one of these calm days, I visited the family of Israel Wilner. Wilner was married to my cousin Basia, and the family consisted of the Wilners, two children, his mother and two sisters. We had much to talk about and discussed the previous "dark weeks" as though they would never return. In the course of conversation, Wilner pointed to his 8-year-old daughter and said, "Thanks to this girl, we're alive today. If it weren't for her we would all be dead."

Wilner's story was such an interesting one that I shall attempt to retell it, more or less in his own words.

It all happened, he said, early in December, during Chanukah, when we celebrate the great victories of the Maccabees. I began to think of Palestine and started to

wonder why I had never thought of moving there. In the last two decades, we had plenty of chances, and now we are in this foul and rotten Europe living among enemies who are criminals.

Wilner continued his story:

I became fatalistic and said to myself, what will happen, will happen. Yet I could not help thinking how happy we could have been in Palestine. We could have been living and striving for an aim. For thousands of years Jews have been living and working in Europe, thinking themselves safe. We have struggled for our children and the future. We invested our lives in Europe. Why hadn't we returned to our Mother country? There we would have been able to create a safe life for ourselves and a bright future for our children.

Maybe we Jews are different from other people. Perhaps others would have jumped at the opportunity to return to their homeland. Yet when Palestine was opened to all Jews through the Balfour Declaration, we preferred to remain, living among Poles and Ukrainians, thinking of Palestine only when we prayed each morning and evening.

As I tortured myself with these thoughts, I watched my family suffer. Fear and terror embraced us and my mother repeatedly said that she would be better off dead. My wife and sisters tried to convince me that they, too, were a hindrance and wanted to kill themselves. They told me that I alone should try to muddle through, that a man would have a better chance to save himself.

All my properties, my house, my factories, my wealth—inherited from my father and father-in-law—had been taken from me. I did not even have enough money to buy poison.

Then one day, with a plan in mind, I managed to buy some coal. With it, I would heat the oven, and the poisoned fumes would eliminate us. My family joined with me in

this idea and the very next day the oven was heated, the chimney closed and we prepared to die.

We said our farewells, embraced, cried, and lay down on the floor waiting for death to overtake us.

It was silent in the room and all I could hear was our breathing and the beating of hearts. I thought, why did the people of Europe persecute us so? What had we done to deserve this?

I don't remember how long we were lying in the room, when suddenly I heard my little girl. She called to me in her high voice, "Daddy." A shock ran through my body, but I controlled myself and did not answer her. Then she began to cry, "Mommy, Mommy! I don't want to die! I want to live! I'm afraid of death! Mommy! Daddy!"

I broke down, leaped to my feet, ran to the window and opened it wide.

Now what? Who knows? Maybe we can live on. There is hope again in the ghetto.

Seven months later, on June 27, 1943, on the twentieth day of Tamuz, in the year 5603 according to the Jewish calendar, Israel Wilner and his entire family were exterminated in the Beskiden Camp.

At the time Wilner told me this story, life was fairly comfortable in the ghetto. Everyone relaxed. The peasants returned to their villages with empty carts.

At this point, I think I should try to place in perspective the kind of life we led when persecution was less intense and the "Actions" were not being carried out.

I should point out that even when life was comparatively calm, it was not pleasant. The so-called "Robbers' Commission" consisting of German Police, which had already been active in Sambor, introduced itself in our area.

Then it went into action. Day by day, they went system-

atically from one dwelling to another, taking everything they could lay their hands on. No house or apartment escaped them. First, they took only first-class goods; fine furniture, good carpeting, and high quality men's and women's clothing. On their second trip through, they were less particular; the third and fourth times around, the homes were stripped of everything. By May, 1943, there was nothing more to loot. The dwellings were bare with the exception of old bottles, broken pots, rags and paper.

Jewish property was considered war booty belonging to the German State and so robbing went on without any protesting.

The Jewish homes outside the ghetto were handled in a rather different way. There, the Germans confiscated the best houses, declaring them property of the State. The ordinary dwellings were sold to the local populace at very cheap prices.

This wholesale plundering made life even worse for the Jews, whose only source of income was their personal belongings—and now these were being taken away from them. Those who did fairly well were the few merchants and shopkeepers of the ghetto. There were constant demands for food and clothing and, as a result, they suffered far less than the rest of us.

In the ghetto there was an active "underground" Stock Exchange, with gold, jewels and foreign currency being bought and sold. Life, as you can see, continued along some of its "normal" paths.

I should say that some of these illegal businesses were owned jointly by Jews and non-Jews. From time to time, the non-Jewish partners would betray the Jew and as a result all his property would be taken by the non-Jew. The Jew would be happy to get away with his life and this method of robbery, too, was quite common.

Meanwhile the peasants themselves had looted so heavily

that they were able to undersell the Jews. In addition, the Jewish merchants sometimes gave away their goods before the Robbers' Commission could get their hands on the material.

Outside the ghetto, many Jews, in partnership with non-Jews, began to open shops where they sold old clothes. Naturally, the official owner had to be Aryan. Unofficial Jewish partners continually bought clothes in the ghetto and transported them to the shops in the dead of night. For a brief period this business flourished. Then the Gestapo learned of it. Trucks appeared at the shops and in an hour or so the stores were emptied.

Social organizations were slowly established. There was a sick fund and a tax office, a communal kitchen, a Jewish hospital and other such organizations.

At the kitchen, a plate of soup and 100 grams of bread was issued once every day. There were always long lines of people—many of them previously successful and influential—waiting for the free meager allotments.

The Jewish Hospital was founded by the Jewish Council. When the Gestapo invaded the ghetto, they cruelly drove the sick into the streets and loaded them onto trucks. We never saw them again. But later, during the peaceful period, the Gestapo assured the Jewish Council that they would not again force the patients out of the hospital. In the "November Action" the sick were not driven into the streets; instead, the Germans marched through the wards and shot them in their beds. Nevertheless, the Council kept the hospital going.

Jewish intellectual life was crushed. The German authorities forbade the establishment of Jewish schools and the only way children were taught was for educated Jews to visit their homes and give private lessons. No lectures on Jewish subjects were given, for life had become too hard

and too bitter for the Jews to care about Jewish history, religion and cultural themes.

Until August, 1942, the only Jewish newspaper we saw was the *Gazeta Zydowska,* which was sent on from Warsaw and consisted of four small pages written in Polish. It appeared three times a week and was not as good as pre-war Jewish newspapers, but we were all happy to read it. We followed with special interest the work of Dr. Edmund Weiss and Dr. Hillel Seidman.

Jewish books, which were held in great respect, were torn apart by non-Jews and used as packing paper. When the Jews were forced to move to the ghetto, they were unable to take their books and so the volumes were left behind, and collected by poor folk who sold them for packing paper. You can imagine how many books were destroyed from the fact that the price of packing paper decreased from two zloties to fifteen grosh per pound.

As death lived so closely to us, the young people tried hard to enjoy life. As a result, respect for morality diminished. Jewish women, who felt they might die any day, these same women who had been chaste and proper all their lives, sold themselves in order to survive. During the various Actions, the most beautiful women in the ghetto became mistresses of the German and Ukrainian Policemen. They wanted desperately to live, but sometimes, when their lovers tired of them, they were sent into the streets during an Action or shipped to a collecting point, from whence they were sent to their death.

The men who did not work continually played cards in the ghetto and drank heavily in an effort to conquer their boredom. They, too, wanted to forget the conditions under which they lived.

After November, 1942, 10,000 Jews managed to survive. About 1,000 had escaped into the woods, with 1,500 more working for the Germans. Another 1,500 managed to find

hiding places. This left about 6,000 Jews in the ghetto in Drohobycz.

The streets were usually empty as young people worked and old folks preferred to remain in their homes. Only on Sundays were the streets crowded. The workers received passes to leave the camps in the morning and return in the evening. Later, the Germans abolished this system and issued passes only to the handful of Jewish Council members. From this point on, no workers were allowed to enter the ghetto. On Sundays, they were marched to the bathing area and allowed to wash themselves. The ghetto Jews eagerly looked forward to this day.

During the first months of the German occupation, many babies were still being born, but the birth rate soon decreased radically. As far as I know, only one marriage took place after the "August Action." Strangely enough, the couple was wed at the cemetery. This custom originated during the Middle Ages when plagues were prevalent. It was believed that further disaster would be averted if people were married at a cemetery, thus the couple was married among the graves. The marriage was preformed by Zalel Bartfeld.

The Situation of The Christians

The non-Jews, the so-called Aryans, Ukrainians and Poles, were not much better off than Jews. They participated in the looting that took place and profited at our expense, but the Germans treated them just as harshly as the Jews. Christians were subject to compulsory labor service, from the ages of eighteen to sixty. Younger boys and girls were also put to work and housed in barracks. Those unwilling to work were sent to concentration camps in Germany and if the Ukrainians thought that the Germans would liberate them from the Poles, they were bitterly disappointed.

In addition, the peasants were also exploited. They were ordered to deliver most of their produce to the occupation forces. In the beginning, they were not pressured, but when the deadline came and deliveries were not made, German Police entered their villages, selected ten of the finest homes and set them afire. The local Mayor was forced to make a public statement to the villagers informing them that if they did not meet their quotas within three days, the entire town would be razed.

As a result, the peasants immediately delivered up their cattle, horses and pigs. Each young pig was registered and

the peasant was forced to slaughter it, with half going to the Germans and half remaining with him. The same held true for cattle. The Germans were eager to obtain milk, and, depending upon the number of cows a farmer owned, a milk quota was set for him. The Germans didn't care if the quota was too high and it often happened that a peasant had to buy milk from his neighbor to fill the quota. The milk was carefully examined for its fat content and the Germans punished those who watered it. Deliberately and arrogantly the Germans showed in every possible way that they were conquerors. They avoided any contact with the native population. They rode in railway cars bearing "For Germans Only" signs. On the doors of hotels and cafes there appeared the legend "Jews and Poles Forbidden." Movie houses and theatres were opened three times a week for Germans, twice a week for Poles and one day a week for Ukrainians.

More aggravating than all this, were the shops established for Germans. In the show windows we saw national products which were not available to the natives, but were sold to Germans for trifling sums.

When the Gestapo was not busy persecuting Jews, they kept active executing gypsies and beggars, all of whom were thrown into mass graves—like the Jews.

When Soviet prisoners were brought to our area, there were no Jews among them. They had been separated from the Russians and were shot on sight by their captors. The Germans also brought a large group from the Volga German Republic in Russia, most of whom—originally of German descent—were elderly men and women who had lived in their homeland all their lives, and whose parents and grandparents had been raised on Russian soil on the Volga. By the end of 1942, more than 250 of these Russian-Germans had come to Drohobycz. They had no idea of the meaning of Nazism and were ignorant of the German theory of racial

purity. When they learned what the Germans were doing to Jews, they began to fear for themselves and suspected that they were brought here for liquidation. They were right.

A few weeks later, a large group of Russians—about 150—were led to Bronica and shot. Before the executions took place, brigades of laborers were ordered to dig large pits; it was at this point that we all became panicky, for we now knew that mass murders were about to take place. But this time, they were digging for the Russians.

Meanwhile, I had found jobs for my brother and myself in the Hyrawka Gardens, for inasmuch as my brother was ordered into a special barrack, I lived partially in the Hyrawka and partially in the ghetto. Everyone in the ghetto had a special hiding-place, for without one a Jew was lost. I found one for me and my brother which was the hiding-place of a Mr. Schnall. Before Mr. Schnall permitted us to move in, he checked on us carefully in order to make sure he was not running any risk in taking us in.

On a Sunday in February, panic broke out in the ghetto. When I saw Jews scurrying about looking to hide, I ran to Schnall's hiding-place. There were already many men, women and children there. Schnall permitted the children to hide with him, but only after he made sure that their parents had supplied him with enough drugs. Through past experience, it was known that children often screamed, and in this fashion betrayed others in hiding with them. As the panic broke, more and more people knocked at Schnall's door, but he only allowed those to enter who had prior reservations.

The place filled up, and eventually, I found myself in the cellar with many others, while upstairs scores of people were milling about.

As we sat in the cellar, we suddenly heard loud shrieking

upstairs. We were petrified. After a long wait, some of us pushed our way to the ladder, which led to the main floor. A woman in the upstairs room told us what happened: In order to get to the cellar from the kitchen, we had to crawl through a large baking oven. While I and some others managed to get to the cellar, people had jammed in the oven which collapsed under the pressure of overcrowding. Most of these people now jammed the cellar, which no longer remained a hiding-place. Some Jews now believed they were fair game for the German and Ukrainian Police.

Simultaneously, debates began as to whether we should stay or look for another place. Some argued that the German and Ukrainian Police would not look behind a collapsed oven. Finally we all agreed to leave the cellar. I was the last one out.

When I stepped into the street of the ghetto, I was met by silence. No human being was to be seen. The houses were dark and desolate, with no smoke rising from their chimneys. I saw a frightened cat crawl along the wall but it smelled death and hurried away. The streets were bare; void of the usual bits of paper and rubbish lying about.

I stood there, not knowing where to go. I thought I would follow the others, but it seemed as if they had been swallowed up by the earth. I walked from house to house, knocking on every door, but received no answer.

The echo of my steps pursued me and I was seized with panic. Finally, I reached the building of the Jewish Council. All was desolate . . .

I came to the "Kommandanture" of the Jewish Police which was nearby, hoping to meet a Jewish Policeman. I opened the door and found myself in a darkened room filled with cigarette smoke. Here there were many Jewish Policemen, wearing their blue caps with a Star of Zion. My entrance caused a commotion. What was a civilian doing here before an Action was to take place? They all crowded

around me. Fortunately, I recognized one of the Police, a Mr. Licht. Our eyes met.

"What are you doing here? Why don't you hide yourself?" he asked me.

I told him how I managed to get there, and he replied, "You have to do something. The Action may begin at any moment. The Germans have been drinking for hours and they may strike soon."

I asked him if it was possible for me to hide there until evening. Then, I said, at dark I would slip into my brother's working camp.

He replied that this would not be a good idea as the place was being watched carefully.

"If you have money," one of the Police said, "I can manage to hide you."

My friend assured him that I did. "Where can you hide him and how much will it cost?" Licht asked. Both men moved into a corner and consulted with each other in whispers.

Then they motioned that I should follow them. Licht assured me that they were taking me to a safe place. We went into the street, walked from one lane to another through the Komaner Synagogue. In a few more paces, we entered a garden, and walked through it to a small house. The door was padlocked. One of them stepped forward, opened it and as we entered, we found ourselves in a large narrow passageway. Here I paid the money agreed upon, and we walked into the kitchen. From there, we entered a room which had some wooden beds. The policemen moved one of the beds from the wall. He knocked several times on the floor, speaking in a loud voice to someone I could not see. We heard movement and suddenly two boards of the floor were raised.

A voice called up, "What's going on up there? Can we come out?"

No. I want to know whether you can admit a friend of mine who has no place to hide."

The voice replied, "What do you expect from me? We're suffocating down here, and you're bringing us another one?"

They talked for a few more moments and then I was shoved down through the opening. The man beneath had no choice but to let me climb down. I could see that the cellar was indeed very small.

There were a dozen people seated on benches against the wall, and on the floor were women holding their sleeping children. The planks were slammed down again, and I stood in the darkness, daring not to move, fearing that I might hurt someone.

There was utter silence in the darkened room. I realized that they were angry, as I had been forced upon them. Obviously, the man who brought me here was in control and they could not turn him down. My eyes slowly accustomed themselves to the darkness. I sat down on the floor.

It was hot in the cellar and I noted that there was little air. I thought for a moment that we would all suffocate.

Towards five o'clock in the morning, we heard the first shots. At first they were faint, but soon they became stronger and more frequent. We could also hear the rattling of machine guns.

The Action has begun. The mothers are ordered to make sure that their children do not cry. We are careful not to utter a sound, or cough, or clear our throats.

A short time has passed and there is rattling at the upstairs door. We hear some blows and the door is broken open. There are heavy steps overhead that come closer and closer. Beds are moved aside. Wardrobes are toppled and fall with a loud crash. We crouch and hold our breath, hearts beating rapidly. In a few minutes the steps seem to withdraw and after a while—silence. We begin to relax and move about.

Twenty minutes later, we again hear heavy steps in the room above; this time not only are the beds moved, but floor boards are pulled up. We are frozen with fear, thinking that we will be discovered. But the sounds retreat and soon another group comes, then a fourth and a fifth. They arrive regularly, every twenty minutes. This lasts for hours and, finally, the firing stops. The search has gone on for seven hours and we are still safe. Perhaps we are destined to live.

But at 2 P. M., the shooting resumes. The Action is again in progress. I figure it will last about four hours, and once more we will be able to breathe fresh air.

I think how lucky it is that America was discovered, because there, six million Jews are safe, and do not have to face the dangers we are experiencing. How irrational history is! Yet these thoughts are only passing comfort and do not really help those of us who are trapped here.

At four P. M. another group enters the house and systematically begins the search. They are more careful than the others in looking for an entrance to the cellar. They move the beds away and thump at the boards, listening for a hollow sound. We sit in absolute silence. Will they overlook the two boards that can betray us? No, they do not miss up. They have noticed a hollow sound. They knock several times, seemingly convinced there is an opening. They proceed to chop with axes, but the wood is well-bolted from the inside and does not give way.

They shout, "Open! Open up!"

The axes are again chopping and the chinks become wider and wider as rays of light filter through our hiding place.

The boards give way and daylight explodes. We have been discovered! We are lost!

We hear a German ask, "Is anyone down there?"

A Ukrainian replies, "It's full of Jews."

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We hear someone leave the house. In a few minutes reinforcements arrive and we are ordered up.

We do not move. Suddenly, a shot is fired into our hiding-place. The noise shocks us into activity. We jump up from our seats. Children begin to scream. One man lies dead in the cellar, his brains blown out. A young woman, apparently the dead man's daughter, pulls at him and cries, "Father, father, come, we must go up." But of course, the dead man does not hear her anguished cries.

Slowly, we all climb up the ladder. Four Nazi Policemen and a group of Ukrainian militia are armed with guns, ready to fire.

I look about me and for the first time see the people with whom I have spent the last twenty-four hours. Faces are flushed and bloody. A woman carrying a child tries to open a window to escape. A shot is fired and she falls back into the room. She tries to rise again, but a second bullet kills her. Another woman picks up the weeping child.

After the Germans batter a few more women and children, we are all marched into the street. It is a nice winter day, with a light blue mist floating over the ghetto. The sun is sinking and its rays are especially attractive to us who have been trapped in a dark cellar. How good it would have been if we were free!

There are Police at every corner, ready to shoot at will, should we make a false step. Every once in a while a German shoots a Jew, but meanwhile we are kept marching. As we leave the ghetto, there are joyful crowds of Poles and Ukrainians watching us being herded to what everyone thinks is our death.

We finally arrive at the prison of the court of justice. Here, a Gestapo group leader named Gabriel takes charge and we are divided into two groups: Women and children are locked into one cell, men into another.

In the Shadow of Death

The cell which I was thrust into, was nearly filled. There was not a single bench, chair or bed. The walls of the cell held many inscriptions, the names of those unfortunates who had passed through on their way to execution. There were rows upon rows of names with dates of imprisonment and probable execution.

I speculated on why a man so close to death should bother to engrave his name on a prison wall. Man refuses to believe that he will be obliterated from the world, his memory defaced. Great men are fortunate. They leave their great works behind; symphonies, novels, huge buildings and great victories in war. But the average man cannot look forward to such major accomplishments. And the men who passed through this prison had to content themselves with their names on a wall, knowing that they would never have a tombstone. The writer hopes those who come after him will see his name and think of him for a moment.

In addition to names, angry sentences were also scratched in Yiddish on the wall. One read: "Murderers! Our blood will not be silent!" Another said: "Amalek! Bitter will

be your end!" Other phrases were less angry, more resigned: "Lord, that you may do ill, we see best ourselves. But do not forget the criminals of the Gestapo and the Ukrainian Militia!"

As we look about us we recognize friends and relatives. The men are busy embracing one another, weeping bitterly.

Sitting in a corner reading, is Rabbi Wolf Nussenbaum, the spiritual leader of Drohobycz, author of many books and dean of the Yeshiva in Lublin. The rabbi's face is furrowed with grief and he looks as though he himself is responsible for the misery in the cell. For more than thirty years, he taught Jews ethics and morality, asking them to believe in God. And now? He looks as though he wants to hide. Rabbi Nussenbaum rises, draws his prayer belt tight and turns his face to the wall in silent prayer. Some of us who are close by, ask him respectfully, "May we pray together?"

"Of course," the rabbi says. "I haven't invited anyone to join me because of the great bitterness I sense in this cell."

A voice cries out, "We want to pray. Is anyone against that?"

A reply is heard. "Why should we oppose prayer? We've prayed all our lives and will be faithful to the Lord until our last breath."

We all rise and the rabbi recites the Kaddish, the prayer for the dead. We join in the silent prayer, the "Shmone Esre." Although pious Jews throughout the world recite this prayer three times a day, it sounds so strange in this cell. Even the words seem to have different meanings. Why should we pray now? What does it mean to pray for a "good year?" In our minds, we are practically dead. As we recite, we sigh and groan. Finally, the silent prayer becomes a single, united cry. We no longer repeat the words of the Hebrew text. Instead we ask, "Oh Lord, what do you want from us? How have we sinned that such perse-

cution should be visited upon us? Oh Lord, we have renounced the joys of life, according to your doctrine. What have we done to deserve this fate?"

Our lamenting is heard throughout, and soon the entire prison resounds with the cries.

A German slides open a panel at the door and calls out, "Be silent, you damn Jewish pigs! If you don't shut up, we'll beat you all."

We struggle to control ourselves. We try to sleep to forget we are in prison, facing death.

The next morning, Polish guards provide us with water and we pool our money, bribing them to bring us bread and cigarettes. They tell us that within the last twenty-four hours, more than 1,000 Jews have been arrested and imprisoned. We are told that the Germans will not bother to transport us and that we will be killed in the Bronica forests, near Drohobycz. They say it might happen in two days.

Before we shall be killed, the guards will take us to the prison office, where we will be searched all over and all our possessions, except clothing, taken away. The following day, we will be driven to the execution area.

Meanwhile the Polish guards are anxious to do favors in order to get our money before the Germans confiscate it. They unlock cell doors and allow prisoners to visit with one another to make their farewells. I wander from cell to cell, looking for friends and relatives. We embrace, telling each other that we hope to die without too much pain. We dread the idea of being wounded and tossed into graves while still alive. There are rumors that living men and women are thrown into mass graves, covered by earth.

We arrange for messages to be delivered to friends and relatives on the outside. I write a farewell note to my brother: "As you're the last surviving member of our family, I hope you manage to live through the war and through this hell. I'm now prepared for the worst. In my mind,

I've been dead since I first arrived in Janover Camp and consider the last few months as having lived on borrowed time. I try to give myself courage by convincing myself that I'm already an old man and my time has come. Man cannot live forever. I've suffered much, but this agonizing experience will soon pass. When you hear of the executions, you will know that I'm dead. Try to save yourself, as in living, you will be avenging the entire family against these Nazi criminals. And, if God is willing to spare you, settle in a Jewish community, marry a Jewish woman, and if you will be blessed with children, name them after those who have been killed, so that in this fashion, we will all live on. I assure you that my last thoughts are for you."

I feel better, knowing that my brother shall read these final words. I am ready to die.

As the first group is led to the prison office, we try to destroy everything of value, still in our possession. Gold and jewelry are flung into toilets, papers destroyed. It is not surprising to learn that the men assigned to cleaning the toilets, dig through the filth to salvage what they can.

We are led to the office. Gestapo authorities order us to empty our pockets, throwing everything into a large box. They warn us that we will be searched afterwards and if anything is found, they will cut out our tongues, pierce our eyes, and sever our limbs. We are convinced that they mean what they say, for we have heard of such atrocities.

We clean out our pockets, throwing everything into the box, but we are searched only superficially and then led to another cell. Here, we are under strict surveillance. Every once in a while, a prisoner timidly asks for water. But the only response is cursing. They say we will be shot, surely an item of news which no longer surprises us. Yet we are still terribly afraid. How man clings to life!

I wonder if death will come as hard to the others as it will to me. Do I feel this way because I am still young?

But a glance at other faces convinces me that they, too, are suffering at the thought of death, regardless of age.

The old rabbi rises and begins to talk to us. He attempts to offer consolation. He tells of the vanity of life on earth and that we are at the beginning of a new, more glorious life.

"For thirty years I have been leading you in the ways of God. I have been guiding you on matters of morality, manners and grace. I assure you that these teachings will be valuable to you in the hours ahead."

He looks at the heartbroken, beaten men who are listening to him in silence. Suddenly, his voice breaks and his eyes flash. He raises his arms and cries out in a loud voice, "Damned be the Amalek of today who is aiming to destroy the ancient house of Israel! May he be cursed for the murders of innocent men, harmless women and children! All traces and signs of him shall be wiped out by God for all generations."

He assures us that we will be saints and martyrs who possess a divine idea that our enemies cannot fathom. He asks us to rise and repeat the words of the Vidui, the prayer of death. He recites each word methodically and we repeat after him: "Oshamnu, Bogadnu, Gozalnu."

"We have done wrong

"We were faithless

"We have robbed . . ."

As we recite, a Polish guard opens the sliding panel and watches us. From the other cell, the women entreat us to write down the words of the Vidui as they wish to recite it. The Pole cooperates and passes through paper and pencil and soon the women join us.

The rabbi's speech and the recitation of the Vidui calm us and we now wait for our final moments.

Outside, we hear automobile engines and once more we become excited. The women begin to scream, a guard fires a shot and there is silence once more. Heavy steps are heard

in the corridor. Later on, our cell is flung open and the Germans drive us out through two lines of police into the open courtyard.

The day of doom has come.

They are beating us with whips and we hold our hands over our heads to escape the blows.

We reach the trucks bruised and beaten. We enter, and lie down on the floor. The vehicles begin moving.

The Execution

The truck is filled with Jews, some of whom are lying on top of me, while I am lying on others. Their weight crushes me and I can scarcely breathe. Finally the truck stops and we are in Bronica.

We are ordered out and I see about me a large clearing in the middle of the thick forest. The trees are laden with icicles which remind me of frozen tears. At the edge of the clearing there are two long, deep trenches. The first group is sent twenty paces from them and told to undress. Soon they are stark naked and trembling in the cold. They are herded to the trenches over which the Germans have placed long planks on which four or five people can stand. Machine gunners at the other end, are preparing to do their work.

The first five on the plank are shot. The bodies fall directly into the trench. Then five more are sent to the plank and the guns spit death again.

The entire area is surrounded by armed guards so we know that death is inevitable no matter what.

The children are not shot. Instead, they are taken from their mothers and thrown directly into the trenches, to be

buried alive. The first trench is filled with corpses. Some are still alive and twitching convulsively. But it does not make any difference, for dirt is being tossed into the mass grave.

The machine guns continue their rhythm of death.

Now my group prepares for death. I am ordered to take a man who was killed by a German bullet from the truck and remove his clothing. I am terrified. I work as though in a nightmare.

I finish and begin to undress. I get one shoe off, but the lace on the other is knotted. As I try to loosen it, I lose my balance and fall on the huge heap of clothing which has accumulated. As I struggle with my clothes, I find myself buried in the heap. I creep deeper into what is suddenly a hiding-place. There is shooting around me, but as I crouch in the clothing, the noise becomes duller. I do not think at all. I act instinctively, like an animal. Now the shooting and crying have ceased; the noise of the truck engines has died away.

Finally, the clothes covering me are being taken away and the weight on my body grows lighter. Should I creep out now or wait until I am discovered? Or should I try to make believe I am dead.

In a moment I will be discovered. I decide to act. I throw off the few remaining pieces of clothing which cover me and rise as though I were a diver emerging from the depths of the sea. I look around me. The guards are busy looking for valuables but when they see me, they begin to beat me.

The trenches are now filled with earth. More than 1,000 Jews are buried here, and it is a miracle that I am still alive.

One of the guards snarls, "Come on! Get busy and dig a grave for yourself."

They are not allowed to leave a corpse lying about and so I am ordered to work on my own grave. I dig a hole

alongside the trenches and when I am dead, will be "squeezed in" more or less with the others.

I shovel the icy yellow earth which soon will cover me. Meanwhile, most of the guards are rummaging through heaps of clothing looking for valuables. One of them discovers gold coins, and the two guards standing over me are distracted by the find.

I do not know what comes over me, but I leap at the guard closest to me and hit him with a shovel. He falls back, his gun dropping from his hands. In desperation I sprint toward the woods. The guards are aware of what has happened. They scream and order me to stop, but now I am fleeing for my life. I continue running.

As I rush through the woods, the guards chase me. I leap over fallen trees, drag my legs over marshy ground. I stumble and rise again, running through the snow and gray fog.

They will not give up their chase, for I am the only living witness to what has happened.

My heart is pounding; I am dizzy and spears jab at my lungs, but I am determined that I shall not be caught.

Suddenly, I see a clearing in the distance and think that I am getting out of the woods. I am wrong; it is a ravine packed with snow. I try to jump over it. I fall short, land in the snow and find myself sinking.

I am trapped. I can hardly catch my breath and am becoming giddy. I am afraid that I will die here.

I pick up a handful of snow and put it to my temples and then to my mouth. I feel better. Perhaps I shall survive, to tell the world what I saw in the woods of Bronica near Drohobycz, in the twentieth century, in the advanced scientific age of the airplane and radio.

I recall the story of a girl who escaped from a situation similar to mine months earlier, and who staggered back into the ghetto, naked, and stark raving mad. I wonder if

the same fate shall befall me, for I cannot ever forget what I have seen: The crying, shrieking, struggling and killing.

I am cold. I am in the ravine for hours. I realize that I am wearing only a pair of trousers, one stocking and one shoe. But I know that I cannot die here. I begin to move my arms and legs, and I feel circulation returning.

I pull myself out of the ravine by the roots of a large tree.

It is night; the sky is full of stars and a light wind is blowing. I walk around the ravine and reach the woods again. I stop.

Where shall I go? If I go to Drohobycz, it is possible that the Jewish Council has been informed of my escape and will seize me. I could try to return to Sambor, but I have not eaten for five days and feel I cannot survive the long walk.

I decide to walk through the woods again, back towards Drohobycz. They did not know my name. The woods are clear of snow and all is quiet. I listen for movement and make sure not to step on dry branches. I pick up a heavy stick to defend myself.

After an hour, I am back at the clearing where the executions took place. Is it possible that it can be so peaceful after what happened hours ago? The graves are covered and I feel a deep sense of guilt. I am alive while one-thousand Jews lie dead. They have been killed only because they are Jews. I am a Jew. Yet my life has been spared.

As I look at the graves, I remember those who are buried here . . . I recall the hairdresser in the cell who used to tell us how prosperous he was and how happy he was with his wife. I remember the coachman who used to talk about the joyous Sabbaths he had with his wife and children after a long week's labor. I vividly remember the pretty young girl of nineteen who embraced her father just before their

death, and was glad to die with him.

I can see them all and grieve as I think back on these innocents who died needlessly and cruelly. I am tormented that I alone have survived even for a moment.

I walk on and on until I reach the narrow lanes of the ghetto. It is night. I sit down near the house where I had been staying. I have no doubt that our enemies will destroy us. I used to think that a people who survived Egypt, Persia, Babylonia and Rome would live forever.

Dawn rises. I walk toward the house and knock. I hear the voice of my cousin Chuma. I answer. She lets me in and I see people I know well: Cyla, Chuma and Rose.

They managed to survive in a hiding-place that Backenroth got for them. I wash and go to bed. I am cold and cannot overcome the feeling that the bed is colder than the ravine in which I was trapped. I ask what day it is: Friday. I remember the pleasant and happy Fridays in my parents' home and then my mind falters. Nightmares crowd my memory and I fall into a faint.

I open my eyes. My brother is sleeping in the next bed. I wake him, "Why are you sleeping now? It's daytime."

My brother smiles and replies, "During the nights, I was busy tending you."

I do not know what he is talking about and remember the girl who went mad. Am I losing my mind?

He explains, however, that I have been sleeping for two days. I had a high fever and everyone felt that if I slept long enough I would recover from my terrible experience.

It is evident that my escape must be kept strictly secret. I am visited by my cousins, who rejoice at my escape. Among my visitors is Schnall, who had been so anxious about me, that my relatives took him into their confidence, telling him that I was alive. He informs me that he is planning to build another hiding-place and wants me and my brother to join him. I learn from him that there has been another

survivor from the massacre which I escaped. She is a 19-year-old girl named Amalia Stock, whose parents had been killed earlier, and was now being hidden by her married sister. When her truck came to Bronica, she managed to hide under a pile of clothing and was still there when it left the execution area. The truck then drove to a Jewish labor camp. When the clothes were unloaded by the Jews working there, she was recognized at once and aided in her escape. Within an hour she was back in the ghetto with her sister. She saw one thing that I missed. Photographers taking pictures of the murders.

Amalia visits me several times and is confident that she will outlive the war. Alas, she died in Bronica four months later when the ghetto was liquidated.

In thinking back on these terrible experiences, I realize I have been unable to describe in adequate detail the horrors through which we all passed. But I am convinced that the crimes committed were so enormous, that no one could do justice to these events. Words, no matter who uses them, and regardless of artistic power, cannot convey to the reader the reality as we lived through it. Only those who were *there*, can describe it all, even if inadequately.

Interval

There is no doubt that nature, with the passage of time, assuages pain and cauterizes wounds. It is one of the marvels of nature. Otherwise, man would not be able to endure the agonies through which he must pass. The weeks move along and eventually man turns back to life. What has happened is over and done with, he thinks. Life must go on.

In the same fashion, my own life continued. One evening, I visited the house of Rabbi Wolf Nussenbaum in an attempt to retrieve a manuscript he had left behind, containing Talmudic problems in which he exhibited his deep scholarship.

I found the manuscript lying on the floor in a pile of books and papers. I feel that part of him is still alive, even though I vividly remember him dying in the mass killings at Bronica.

Within the ghetto itself, Jews tried hard to reorganize their lives, making all sorts of plans, even if some of them were unrealistic. Youngsters returned to the woods, looking for partisans while older folk worked tirelessly in an effort to make permanent hiding-places out of their temporary ones.

At this time, the Germans liquidated the Jewish post office, which served as a communications center for all Jews in every ghetto. Now, all the ghettos were totally separated from one another. Jews were no longer allowed to phone other Jews, or wire or write. If a Jew wanted to contact a fellow Jew in another town, he would usually get in touch with two Christians, one of whom would have to deliver the message to a second Christian, who, in turn, would transfer the letter to the addressee.

I received a letter from my brother-in-law, Moses Mandelbaum, in the Sambor ghetto, who was planning to cross the Carpathian Mountains into Hungary. He had a good chance to escape to Hungary, and from there, emigrate to Palestine. The group leader had successfully guided one unit from Sambor to Hungary. My brother-in-law, in divulging this information to me, indicated that my brother and I could join up for a similar trip after his group left. This new opportunity excited me greatly and I sent a message to my brother in the camp asking that he meet me.

I told him what Mandelbaum had written and we decided to take a chance and return to Sambor. We told Schnall of our plan and asked him to reserve a spot for us in his new hide-out should we fail. He agreed, and we left Drohobycz at dawn, passed through the town and across the woods until we reached the ghetto of Sambor two days later.

The Last Days of the Sambor Ghetto

The Sambor ghetto was a small one, consisting of one main street, called Mnishcha Lane, which was about eighty meters long. A few smaller lanes branched into it. The entire area—called the "Bleich"—was surrounded by barbed wire. There was a large synagogue on the bleaching ground of the town, which was not part of the ghetto, for the entrance to the synagogue led to a street outside the ghetto proper.

The Jewish cemetery, however, was part of the ghetto and a most "popular" place. Not only were people being buried daily, but the living often took refuge there, sitting on the grass, talking in the mellow Spring evenings and dreaming of a time when life would return to normalcy. A second synagogue, a very small one, served as a hospital.

There were about 3,000 people in the ghetto, a large part of them natives of Sambor, the other from nearby towns, Stary, Sambor, Felshtyn, Turka, etc.

The Germans had two aims in mind when they established the ghetto. To begin with, they herded all the Jews into one area so when they went into an Action, they could

be assured no one would escape. Secondly, it was easier to starve the Jews to death within the ghetto. So long as food held out, the Jews could live. Once supplies were used up, they would perish en masse. The Germans miscalculated to an extent, for the Jews did not die with the speed anticipated. Weeks followed weeks and they managed to stay alive.

How did this happen?

In the beginning, supplies were used up quickly, but after a while, some of the young men managed to obtain food from the outside, by escaping the ghetto through sewers. In addition, the local peasants were willing to trade with the Jews and openly bartered with them near the barbed wire border.

In some respects, life in Sambor was more comfortable than life in Drohobycz. In Drohobycz, German Police and militia marched about, plundering, stealing and killing. In Sambor, on the other hand, there was only one higher Gestapo representative and a few German policemen. The Gestapo agent, a man named Wiesner, was later killed by fellow Germans when he went mad.

Many rabbis were at Sambor, including: Rabbi Pinchas Twersky of Ostile, Rabbi Simcha Rubin-Horowitz of Sandowa Wysnia, and the Rabbis of Komarno, Dembice, Zagorz, Teschin, Bikowsk, Rabbi Mieses of Sambor, Rabbi Kalman Jolles, and the renowned scholar Rabbi Jakob Turkel. They were all later wiped out by the Germans.

Meanwhile, they lived in peace and were highly honored by the Jewish inhabitants. They gave the ghetto stature and made life seemingly pleasant. The Jews in Sambor managed to obtain fowl from the local farmers, but it was impossible to get any other kind of meat. We also obtained vegetables, for it was impossible to grow them in the ghetto.

After the establishment of the ghetto, a number of Jews who had been converted to Christianity were sent there.

At the outbreak of the German-Russian war, in 1941 and during the German occupation, a number of them attempted to escape the fate of being a Jew through baptism. They failed.

During the first months after the war between Russia and Germany, the converts were left alone. But later they received the same treatment meted out to all of us. In Sambor, for example, the converts had only to be registered; in other areas, they were forced to wear Jewish armbands. Wealthy converts managed to avoid trouble by selling their homes and shops, hiding out with Christian relatives in larger towns. Life became unbearable for those that were sent to the ghetto. They were disappointed that the Germans treated them like the other Jews; furthermore, they were afraid that the Jews from the ghetto would take revenge on them for having converted. What would happen to them in the ghetto?

Their fears, so far as the Jews were concerned, were unfounded. They were accepted as fellow Jews and no one took special pains to punish them. With each passing day they lost their fear and, in time, became accustomed to life in the ghetto. In the evenings, however, they stood at the barbed wire enclosure and talked with the Christian members of their families who remained on the outside.

The thousands of Jews in the ghetto of Sambor got along well with one another. They shared what they had, they worried together in times of trouble, and were happy when there was good news for others.

And then, on a Sunday in mid-April, 1943, hundreds of German Policemen led by Wiesner entered the ghetto. Within two hours, a thousand Jews were trapped and brought to the town prison. Two days later, Ukrainian workmen entered the ghetto cemetery to dig a huge pit thirty meters long and three meters deep. On Wednesday, the prisoners were brought to the area, and ordered to strip

naked. They were forced to lie down in the pit alongside one another, facing down. Those who refused, were ordered to stand aside. About sixty people were lying in the grave forming one layer. A policeman walked along the grave and shot everyone in the head. Behind him walked a second policeman making sure no one was alive.

Then a second layer of Jews covered the corpses and they, too, were killed in the same fashion. This process was repeated a third and fourth time.

The Germans then went to work on those who had refused to enter the pit. They cut off their hands and feet, threw them in the communal grave and while still alive, covered them with earth.

In a few hours, a thousand Jews had been liquidated.

From that day forward, hundreds of Jews went to the mass grave to mourn their dead friends and relatives, for all were affected by what happened.

Now the ghetto Jews experienced fear again. In each house a guard remained awake throughout the night, so that every precaution against the Germans might be taken.

It was during this period of terror that my brother and I entered the Sambor ghetto. When we arrived, the entire ghetto knew about the newcomers. Hundreds of them surrounded us and asked all sorts of questions. We became aware that they had been completely cut off from any sort of communication and were most eager to learn what was happening on the outside.

Mandelbaum was anxiously waiting for us and we learned that we had arrived the week he was planning to leave for Hungary with his group.

It did not take long to find out the plans for the Hungary undertaking. Mandelbaum's group included five men, three women and a 12-year-old boy. Some of them already had their families in Hungary and the group leader, who was

believed to be reliable, wanted $1,000 for guiding the group to Munkacz.

When we met the group leader, we were all deeply impressed by him. Stefan was a slender man with a swarthy face, sparkling eyes and a happy manner. He was neither Polish nor Ukrainian, but probably descended from the Turks. A Baptist by religion and a smuggler by profession, he regaled us with many stories of his "professional" life. During the Russian occupation, from 1939 to 1941, his smuggling was fairly active, but now that the Germans were in control, he was far busier. Two or three times a week he crossed the border to Hungary and generally returned with huge quantities of Hungarian cigarettes.

He was not keen on smuggling Jews into Hungary, as he would be placed into a forced labor camp if caught. It was less dangerous smuggling contraband goods from one country to another. He was willing to help Jews in escaping only because he felt an obligation to a Jew named Weiss who had once done him a favor. On his most recent trip to Hungary, he had taken Weiss' oldest son. This particular trip was to include his wife and two children, with Weiss himself scheduled to leave on the following trip. It was, thanks to Weiss, that this attempt was being made.

On May 6, at midnight, we accompanied the group to the ghetto fence. Stefan signaled and the group followed him out of the ghetto. They were soon swallowed up in the darkness and we prayed they would arrive safely in Budapest.

We were scheduled to follow in eleven days. Meanwhile we were busy with preparations. Rabbi Pinchus Twersky, "The Ostyller Rabbi," and his two sons were leaving with us. The Rabbi had just recovered from a bout with typhoid and we were to carry him on a stretcher across the Carpathians.

But things do not always work out according to plan.

Nine days after Mandelbaum and his group left, one of the sons of Rabbi Twersky came to tell me terrible news. He said that a militia man just entered the ghetto and reported that a group of people, on their way to Hungary, had been captured and brought to the Sambor prison. The description of the group fitted Mandelbaum and his cohorts. They were to be shot in a few hours.

I ran to the headquarters of the Jewish Council and told the story to Dr. Schneidscher, who went to talk the matter over with the Gestapo. We stood at the ghetto gate, anxiously waiting for news. Within an hour Schneidscher returned, followed by a group of people. I recognized Mandelbaum. As they came closer, I saw that there were only five in the group. The others had been shot.

"We had bad luck," Mandelbaum said. "But we nearly reached Hungary."

He was happy to be alive, but said, "We'll try again next week."

When we were comfortably settled in our room, Mandelbaum told me what had happened.

Stefan proved to be a good man. He was well versed in forestry and knew every inch of the area. For days he led the group through thick shrubbery, over hedges, ditches, and virgin forests untouched by man. Even as the paths became steeper and the mountains higher, Stefan remained confident in his ability to reach Hungary. He was undisturbed by the German Police patrols in the forest and indifferent to the barking of dogs. The group marched by day and rested at night.

On the evening of the third day, they reached a gorge and it appeared that they would soon be safe. They slept here. The next morning, however, heavy fog encircled them. For the first time, Stefan seemed worried. He asked the group to pack their belongings and follow him to the top of the mountain. Here too, there was an inpenetrable gray

vapor. Stefan wanted to wait until the fog lifted, but the group, having great confidence in him, pushed him on. They marched for several hours through the fog and finally Stefan announced that they were lost. They waited for two days and two nights, cold and uncomfortable, hoping that they would find their way to Hungary. On the third day, they decided to move on. Stefan told them to walk on while he went back to find someone to help him. A few hours passed and he returned with a young peasant, a cousin of his. Everyone was relieved; they would be safe. In a couple of hours they expected to reach a village where the peasant and his father lived. When they came to the home of the peasant, they doffed their wet clothing, ate, drank and hid in a loft.

The next morning they were awakened by noise. They looked into the courtyard, and saw that the house was surrounded by the entire village population. There were cries of "Jews! Jews!"

They had been betrayed; but no one knew who was responsible. It was impossible to escape, as they heard that militia men had been informed of their presence.

The farmers rushed at them with scythes, robbing them of all valuables. Soon Ukrainian militia arrived from a neighboring village. The group said that they had discovered the farmhouse by accident and had taken shelter there. Having no valuables, the group could not bribe them and the Ukrainians paid no attention to their constant pleas. They delivered them to the Germans in Sianke.

When they arrived in Sianke, they were led to the cellar of the building from which the border police operated. That evening, Gestapo agents beat them and later killed three.

The next morning the survivors were manacled and transported to Sambor.

This was the story as Mandelbaum told it.

A few days later, Weiss himself came to the ghetto, and helped organize two new groups. The first included those who had failed in their attempt. Stefan was again willing to guide us and both groups planned to leave on the night of May 22.

We had heard that the Allies ended the fighting in North Africa and we thought the war would soon end. On Thursday, May 20, we spent a pleasant evening in the ghetto. The May weather was lovely and we were all very hopeful. But we did not know that scores of Gestapo agents had come to town, planning an Action against us the next day.

Early Friday morning, we were awakened by Mrs. Karp, a widow in whose home we were staying. She called our attention to the noise in the streets. One of our house guards cried out, warning that an Action was to take place.

We dressed hastily and went to hide in the apartment of a Mr. Sommer. In the street, hundreds of men, women and children were pushing against each other in an attempt to find their prepared hide-outs. Our lives depended on the speed with which we could find our hiding-places. People moved rapidly and, as a result, families were separated. Men lost their wives, children their parents.

The German police entered, looking for prey. We reached our hiding-place as the door was shutting. The cellar of the house in which we hid was well camouflaged, and no matter how intensively the Germans looked for us, they did not find us. But they had done such a thorough job in demolishing the house, that when we finally emerged after the Germans had left, we found it to be unrecognizable. Nevertheless, we had reason to feel satisfied, for others were less fortunate. The Germans had discovered more than twenty hide-outs and had imprisoned some seven-hundred Jews.

We went to the headquarters of the Jewish Council, where we found hundreds of Jews asking Dr. Schneidscher

to help their relatives who had been jailed. He was kept busy, compiling an endless list of those imprisoned.

Late that evening, Dr. Schneidscher reviewed the completed list. Weiss told me that his daughter was missing and he pleaded with me to help him find her. I asked Dr. Schneidscher to find out about the girl.

At midnight, when Dr. Schneidscher returned, we learned that not a single prisoner had been freed. The Germans had fooled him. They had thrown him out, promising nothing.

For hours we walked around the ghetto, restless and nervous. Eventually we returned to our quarters and went to bed. Of the thirty persons who were living in this house, only six had escaped. Mrs. Karp and her three children had also been taken prisoner. My brother, brother-in-law, three men and myself were the remaining survivors.

The sound of shots awoke me. My brother was still asleep, but my brother-in-law's bed was empty. I looked out the window and saw the Gestapo arresting Jews. Three of them were approaching our house. They knocked. We stood stock-still. They did not force their way in, but smashed into the next room and dragged the three young men into the street. The youngsters tried to tear themselves away, but two of them were shot and killed and the third recaptured. The Police had not gone into our room as it was padlocked from the outside, and they assumed it empty. I later learned that my brother-in-law, after leaving the room, had padlocked it.

Gradually the shooting ceased and the streets became quiet. About eighty people had been shot. The Germans had taken most of the dead with them. We heard that some corpses were lying near the ghetto fence and when I got there, I found my friend Aaron Orlander among them. We were later told that they panicked and tried to flee the ghetto, assuming that all the Jews were to be liquidated.

They had been caught and shot. Weiss and his wife also disappeared and I never saw them again.

That same day, 750 Jewish prisoners were driven in box cars to Lemberg. The last car was loaded with corpses. I later talked with a Jewish Policeman who had helped fill the cars with Jews. He told me that he had talked with Rabbi Twersky of Ostylle who had said that the ways of God were inscrutable. The Lord had helped him recover from typhoid and was now handing him over to the bitterest enemies of the Jewish people. But the rabbi said, we are all subject to God's will and must not question his ways.

During the next few days, an unbearable stench pervaded the ghetto. The gutter canal had been totally blocked by corpses and water was pouring out of the gutter, overflowing the streets. People were standing about, trying to identify the decomposed bodies. While looking on, I saw a young girl, wearing horribly soiled clothing, turn up in the ghetto to find her parents. She had lived for five days in the sewers, and was fortunate to find her parents still alive.

Death lurked over the ghetto. Jews tried in every which fashion to save themselves. Some of the young men managed to obtain guns and fled to the woods. Others talked of escaping but did little more than discuss the possibilities. The peasants they contacted told them frankly that their days were numbered. Falling prey to the atmosphere, my brother and I heard the flapping of death's wings over our heads.

On Thursday, May 27, 1943, my brother and I walked to the ghetto fence, crept under it in the darkness, and managed to reach the railroad tracks. We followed the rails all night long and at daybreak, reached the Jewish quarter of Drohobycz.

My brother went to the camp where he had previously been working, while I wandered into the ghetto.

The Last Days of the Drohobycz Ghetto

The Jews in Drohobycz, like those at Sambor, were in the throes of despair. They were convinced that the ghetto would soon be liquidated, but they faced this without panic because there now were many opportunities to evade the Germans. The young folk had gone into the woods and the older people built substantial hiding-places for themselves. Those who had influence and connections left the ghetto and the Jewish Council had lost its potency.

The only influential Jew remaining in the ghetto was Backenroth, who insisted on staying with his people until the end. Dr. Gerstenfeld, who previously headed the Council, was thrown out by the Germans. He was succeeded by an engineer named Borgmann, who could do nothing to ease the problems of the Jews.

Backenroth, who was most familiar with the Nazi methods of destruction, warned the remaining Jews in the ghetto that liquidation would soon come. He knew that Jewish

craftsmen usually were permitted to live, even when mass murders were perpetrated. Now, however, even some craftsmen had been imprisoned. This was a sure sign that the ghetto was to be wiped out. When these men were jailed, panic prevailed and Jews went to hide in their prepared hovels.

I went to see Schnall to remind him of his promise to me. There were now eighteen people prepared to hide with him. For days, I had been gathering up food, giving it to Schnall. He suggested that we come and hide now, rather than wait for another Action. We knew that we would not be attacked unexpectedly as we managed to bribe the militia men. After one final day of heavy preparation, we entered the hide-out feeling rather confident that we would be able to remain here for the duration of the war.

As we entered, we recited the Psalms and invoked God's blessing that we might survive and see Israel prosper once again.

The hide-out was the same cellar from which we had fled some months before. Since that time, many alterations were made. The floor was now covered with wooden boards with beds for all. In the middle of the room there was a table and two armchairs, with a radio set in one corner. We had electric lights, a gas stove, and running water. In addition, there was a second, well-cemented room, where food was stored. Fresh air circulated from the fireplace.

Thus, all of us—eleven men, five women, and two children—expected to remain in this cellar until the end of the war. My brother had to come here through the canal. We had enough food, we calculated for a full year. Yet the feeling that we were trapped like moles upset us . . . We ate meals silently, leaving the table as quickly as possible and lay down on our beds to think. We observed the Sabbath just as we had on the outside; praying and eating special meals, but nevertheless, our lives were not normal.

There was occasional shooting overhead and periodically we heard footsteps above us. In spite of the shooting and activity overhead, we were convinced that this time we would not be found.

For days we waited to hear from a man on the outside whom we trusted. But he did not come. On the following Monday he still had not contacted us and we assumed that the entire ghetto had been liquidated.

On Tuesday, the lights suddenly went out. We thought at first that it was a short circuit and lighted our Sabbath candles. Then one of the women announced that we no longer had running water. We were petrified. Had the Gestapo suspected that we were hiding under this house? Had the supply lines leading to the Jewish quarters been cut? Had the house above us been destroyed? How could we live without water, electricity or gas?

Finally we calmed down and began to analyze the situation. Some thought we could hold out for weeks, while others talked of committing suicide. I proposed that we sneak out through the canal. One other man, Jonas Fischer, was willing to take the chance. The others were content to hope that help would soon be forthcoming. Nevertheless, the two of us decided to go ahead. The others wrote letters to their relatives asking us to deliver them.

On Thursday night, Fischer and I entered the canal. He assured me that we would have no problems, as he had a map of the area with him. We crept along and from time to time Fischer studied the map, with the aid of his pocket searchlight. We moved silently for a long time. Then he whispered that we were in the Listopada Lane and would soon be leaving the canal. He was right. We stopped and Fischer cautiously lifted a sewer cover and crept out. I followed him.

It was pitch black, but we continued walking until we reached a field. We sat down, took off our wet clothes,

putting on dry apparel which we had in our rucksacks.

Suddenly two men appeared in the darkness. We rose and approached them slowly. I asked, in Hebrew, "Amcho? Are you Jews?"

They were the Schachter brothers from Rolow. Behind them was a child and the wife of one of the men. They said their experience was similiar to ours; only their food had run out. They had not eaten for four days and now they were on their way to Rolow in the hope that a peasant they knew would put them up. When they learned that we were trying to enter my brother's camp, they asked us to take the woman and child until they could find out how they would be treated by the peasant.

We agreed, and together we went into the field, slept for a while and, at dawn, all of us reached the camp of Zuckerberg, the so called " Hyrawka-Lumber-Camp."

The Camp

The surrounding land we came to, once belonged to a Jew named Zuckerberg and was now the property of a Ukrainian named Kunicia, who worked for the German army. The place was originally a lumber camp, situated behind the new Jewish cemetery, three kilometers from the town. The Jews working here were supposed to wear the "W" sign, being controlled by the SS. But very few Jews wore this sign and about a dozen others, wore no insignia whatsoever. Kunicia had to pay five zloties daily for "W" Jews, but as the SS did not know of the existence of the others, no payment was made for them. The Ukrainian foreman assured the Jews that if the Nazis wanted them, he would insist that they were needed to fulfill the obligations he had to the German army. And so this handful of Jews felt relatively safe.

There was a second group in this camp, relatives of the workers, who were living in cellar hide-outs or barracks. In addition, there were about one-hundred Ukrainians working here.

Each worker had his own bed in the barracks, which was inspected by a Jew named Jungermann. There were two Policemen, Kammermann and Hallemann, whose job was to guard the workers, making sure they did not escape. It was an easy chore for the guards as the workers were

grateful for the opportunity to be employed here, living in safety.

The Police led the men to work 6:30 in the morning. The workers were given soup twice a day and bread once a week.

The entire camp was surrounded by a high wooden fence which had two entrances from the street, one leading to the barracks, the other to the camp itself. Leaving the area was forbidden under penalty of death.

When we reached the camp, we crept under the big wooden gate and cautiously walked to the barracks. The doors were locked and the windows camouflaged. We entered a nearby stable, waiting for a chance to get into the barracks. Before long, the barracks door creaked open and a man came out. I approached, telling him my brother's name and asking where my brother slept. The Jew pointed to a window on the ground floor, indicating that my brother was there.

I tapped on the window. The camouflaged paper covering was lifted and I saw my brother's face. He was so excited to see me that he leaped out of the window, dressed in his nightgown. He took me and Fischer to his room. The Schachter brothers and their family stayed behind in the stable.

All the Jews crowded around us and began to tell us their story:

On June 8, 1943, from Friday night to Saturday, German Police and Ukrainian militia entered the Jewish quarter with machine guns and grenades. When the grenades exploded, the houses began to burn. Those who fled their dwellings were arrested and driven to the local prison. The wounded were shot dead on the spot.

Murder and terror prevailed in the ghetto until Saturday evening. That afternoon the Gestapo liquidated the Jewish quarter af Sambor and Stryj. The following morning, the Germans posted large announcements informing the Christ-

ian population that the area had now been cleared of Jews. Aryans were ordered to deliver any Jews they were hiding. Only Jews wearing the R and W signs were permitted to continue working in the camps.

When Jews hiding out heard of the destruction of the ghetto, they became panic-stricken, left their hide-outs and ran aimlessly to the woods or tried to find their relatives in various camps. Tired and weak, many of them were caught like birds in passage. From the prisons they were marched to death at Bronica.

Because the Gestapo needed Jewish Police for burial detail, the Germans allowed them freedom of movement in camps where workers were sheltered. On Monday, following the week-end of slaughter, the Jewish Police were marched to the cemetery and told to dig a long deep ditch for the corpses that would be brought there for burial. Then, one of the Nazi Security Police, in a dramatic speech, said that Europe was now free of Jewish domination and the Germans would remember the Jewish Police for services rendered.

Then the brutal irony of the situation became clear. The German spokesman said he did not like the Jews to feel they were unappreciated. As a symbol of German generosity, the Jewish Policemen were to be killed, but not buried in alien woods. Instead, they would be buried here, on native soil, among their fellow believers. They would not suffer the humiliation of being buried alive. Each was to receive two bullets in the head, thus dying immediately and having their agony cut short.

As he spoke, the German signaled for his men to proceed with the executions. Realizing that they were about to die, the Jewish Policemen did an unheard of thing: They fought back. They rushed their executioners and tried to wrest their rifles and pistols from them. The fighting became violent and many Security Police were wounded. The

temporary rebellion, however, did not halt the massacre. Except for one Jew all the Jewish Policemen were murdered.

On Tuesday, the Germans demonstrated their thoroughness in eliminating Jews. They cut off electric and gas supplies in every house of the ghetto and turned on the water taps to drown those who were in cellar hide-outs. When they were forced into the open, they discovered that they soon were to be killed by their tormentors.

After liquidation of the ghetto, the only Jews still alive were those in camps. When a Jew was found in town, he was subsequently handed over to the Police and shot.

This was the story we heard from the survivors.

The camp in which we found ourselves contained a few dozen Jews who had managed to escape the ghetto. Many were here illegally and had no security whatever. At any moment they might be found out. Jungermann was responsible for all inmates. If any of them were found, he would have been put to death. Although he was not an evil man, he was very nervous, for he himself had hidden his parents, wife and child in the camp. A few times a day he went to the hiding-place to see his one-year-old child named Mendele.

The two hiding-places were already overcrowded with more than one-hundred people. Where would the new refugees go? Jungermann ran desperately from one hiding-place to another pleading with Jews to leave the camp. He told them about the woods nearby where they could hide, at least during the day. But no one left. He began to insult the fugitives and in response they shouted he should send his own relatives to the woods. Jungermann became hysterical and soon the yelling and quarrelling became violent. Some of the more reasonable people tried to calm the others. What was the sense of fighting among themselves, they

asked. Wasn't it enough that their arch enemies were trying to wipe them out?

Eventually, all calmed down and it was decided that a third hiding-place would be built under the camp barracks. Until complete, the overflow could hide in the nearby woods to evade the Gestapo. I was among those who sneaked to the woods, returning to camp at night. I learned, when I returned, that friends had interceded for me, managing to get me a job. There was a shop for tailors, a second one for shoemakers and a third for brush makers. Saul Barsam, the foreman of the brush maker shop, was a close relative of mine and it was he who helped place me with the brush makers.

Meanwhile, the Schachter brothers decided to leave for the home of their peasant friend. They bribed the camp chief and were permitted to leave the woman and child for a few days. If they were lucky, they would be able to send the peasant to bring the woman and child to them.

I met the young son of Schnall and told him of the difficulties under which his parents were living in the hide-out. They could not survive much longer without water, electricity or gas. He decided to bring his parents to the camp.

Although we worked laboriously during the day, we worked equally hard at night to build the new hiding-place under the barracks. Within a few days, it was ready and those who hid there felt safe for the time being. But their feeling of security was short-lived. Three days later, they were discovered and rounded up.

I especially remember one particular Saturday. Because the Jews recalled the pleasant Sabbaths before this nightmare began, they were restless on Saturdays. On these days, they were nervous and showed no interest in work. Quite often in the SS camps, Jews were shot on Saturdays because "They did not want to work."

The camp had a new director, a Russian named Moska-

lenko, who was ignorant of the special meaning of Saturday for Jews. During the week, he drove the Jews hard, but soon learned that he could not get them to do work on the Sabbath. So he kept away from us on Saturdays and we were able to sit around quietly, reflecting on our past lives.

On this particular Saturday, we were sitting around talking, when a young Ukrainian broke into our room and yelled. "The Gestapo is here. You'd better get out quickly!"

Some of us rushed to the window to see what was happening, but others sat quietly in their places, thinking that the youngster merely wanted to frighten them. However, he was not joking. In the spacious courtyard, we saw German Policemen and Ukrainian militia armed with machine guns. Panic! Some attempted to tear up planks from the floor to hide under; others scampered up the loft.

An armed German Policeman approached our room and cried, "All Jews, out! Roll call!"

We followed the order, assembled in the courtyard and fell into two ranks. The roll call was read by an SS man named Minkus. Looking at his bloodshot eyes and his puffy face, we realized he was drunk. All work had ceased; all machines were quiet, and even the Ukrainian workers left their shops to watch.

After roll call it was discovered that four men were missing. Minkus snarled at the director that if the four men were not found, he would be taken away. The frightened director ordered the Ukrainian workers to search for the missing Jews and in a few moments three of them were found. A while later, the fourth was discovered. Now every Jew was accounted for. Some eighty of them, listed as "W's" were lined up, as well as twenty others who had no sign but were registered. They were separated from the rest.

Minkus, staggering drunk, with a pistol in each hand, ordered the director to recite aloud the names of the "W's". When their names were called, they were to fall in a sep-

arate group. The work went slowly and Minkus was impatient. Finally he grabbed the list, reading off the names himself. As both hands were occupied, he could not hold the list until he put one pistol between his teeth. Because he was drunk, he could not read or pronounce the names, especially as the gun in his mouth made it impossible for him to talk. He went into a frenzy, threw away the list and ordered the director to pick it up and finish reading it. Meanwhile, however, the list was so badly torn that the director was unable to read the names. He rushed to the office for another copy and hurried out, reading nervously because Minkus kept waving his pistols at him.

When the name of a co-worker of mine was called, he hurried to the group where he belonged. Quickly, I followed him. My brother, whose name had already been called, was standing near me.

The director finished the list and the twenty men still remained in a segregated group. Before Minkus had an opportunity to issue any orders concerning this group, the director pointed out that if these men were taken from him, it would be impossible for the camp to fulfill its commitments to the German army. Minkus stared at him uncomprehendingly and finally began to understand the meaning of what the director said. He suddenly jumped among the twenty men and pushed some of them into our group. The rest were led through the factory gate and we watched them until they disappeared. We stood silently, looking trance-like at the gate without realizing quite what was happening. Soon, however, we awoke to reality and those who had relatives hiding in camp asked the director for permission to return to the barracks, fearing that they had been discovered.

We were marched from the gate of the lumber yard across the street to the barracks. As we neared the barracks' entrance we saw a group of people surrounded by

Police. The hiding-places had been found! The Jewish Police ordered us to stop, but those who saw relatives in the group, pleaded that we be allowed to continue walking. The Police permitted us another twenty steps, and as we got closer there were cries of despair from those who saw their wives and children, parents, brothers or sisters.

About sixty persons were huddled together. I saw the Schachter woman and child and a Hebrew teacher named Feingold, who, with great feeling, used to recite for us the poetry of Bialik by heart. As Feingold stood there, I was convinced that even at this miserable moment, he was remembering and reciting to himself the lines of Bialik's poem, "To The Slaughter."

We were forced to march on and soon lost sight of the group. We assumed that after a few days they would be transported to some unknown place or to Bronica to be shot. We entered the camp silently and dispersed to our rooms with heavy hearts and morbid thoughts.

A few moments later, we heard loud cries in the courtyard. We ran out. What had happened? The Jews were being driven to the nearby woods. We heard shouting voices ordering them about. Many of us climbed the high camp fence to get a closer look at what was happening. We saw the people taking off their clothes, mothers undressing their children and daughters their old parents. Silence. Not even the babies cried as their parents undressed them. The Police loaded their rifles and soon the naked Jews were crying to us. Hearing their laments, some of the Jews on the fence, relatives of the victims, jumped down and ran toward the woods. But they did not get very far.

The executions proceeded slowly at the outset, but moved more quickly as the victims offered no resistance, seemingly wanting their lives to end. One girl, about fourteen, refused to line up in front of the tree. She was shoved to the ground and trampled upon. Then she was shot. Feingold, then

walked to the tree, and was killed. I felt that as he died, he was reciting these lines of Bialik: "The sun was shining and the slaughterer slaughtered . . ."

We were ordered, after the executions, to dig a deep pit in which to lay the dead in rows of three. If we were not quick and had we been sloppy in placing the corpses the way the Germans ordered, we would be shot the following day.

A few days later a group of orphaned ghetto children, ranging from nine to twelve years of age, entered the camp. The group consisted of about twenty children from the ghetto of Drohobycz. Their parents had been killed, their neighbors were gone and they could not expect protection from Jews who were themselves in constant danger.

Life in the woods had hardened these children and made them independent. They had a fierce desire to live and it was amazing how well organized they were. Their leader, an 11-year-old boy named Janek, had popped up from nowhere and made himself their spokesman and guide. It was believed that he and his parents had been loaded into a box car for execution and that he had jumped out of the train while his parents traveled on to their fate. Janek had wandered through villages and towns, across fields, and through woods looking for a group to which to attach himself. He reached Drohobycz, but did not intend to stay there. His dream was to cross the border into a country where there were no Germans. But at Drohobycz, he met this group of children, and became their leader. When the children traded with the townfolk and ghetto dwellers, he was the middle man. They always had to watch out, for the Germans were on the lookout for them. They vanished like ghosts, but always reappeared when they were needed.

They had disappeared into the woods on a Thursday, the day before the liquidation of the ghetto. A few days later,

they found out that the ghetto had been wiped out, that the Jews were gone.

This news broke their hearts. Where were they to go? What were they to do? How long could they continue to hide in the woods?

To add to their misery, the weather was terrible. It rained day and night, and subsequently, the youngsters were unable to find decent shelter. They were drenched, and their clothes, or more accurately, their rags, were uncomfortable.

Out of desperation, they emerged from the woods and wandered about. Finally, they saw the high chimney near our camp and were attracted to it. They guessed correctly that this was a working area and that some Jews might be here.

This is how they found us—about two weeks after the liquidation of the ghetto. Their joy was enormous and we too, wept with pleasure, for it had been a long time since we had seen young Jewish children. We made them welcome, shared our food, and immediately began to think about what we could do to help. We suggested that we could build a hiding-place for them. But they were unwilling to hide here, although agreeable to build a hide-out in the nearby woods.

We established a committee to concentrate on the welfare of the children.

And we did a good job. Every few days, a delegation of children would come to us, and we would supply them with their needs. They did not like to remain in camp too long, for they enjoyed the freedom of the woods and were wary of the camp. But, in the course of time, the kids became bored with the woods and visited more often. We learned from them that all ghettos in the area had been liquidated. The ghettos of Tarnopol and Stanislaw had been liquidated

and a week later, we heard that Lemberg's ghetto was wiped out.

The children were not the only visitors we had. Others, who had found refuge in the woods, came to us and asked for food, which we were glad to let them have. One visitor was a 16-year-old girl, who came every other day for bread and milk for her group. She was a sad girl, always downcast, without hope or faith. She would enter the camp through an opening in the high fence, accept the rations and vanish quickly into the woods. Her sorrow was so heavy, that some of us tried to pump optimism into her, but we failed. Her face remained pale, her eyes dark, her grief deep. The only time I remember her smiling was when we told her that the Allies had invaded Italy.

Rumors prevailed and the Germans sometimes deliberately started false ones, knowing we would become upset upon learning they were untrue. We did realize, however, that when the invasion began, it was no lie. We informed the girl of this news and she uttered a gasp of joy. She thanked us, ran quickly to the woods to pass along the news, and we were pleased that at least now she had something to be happy about.

And then, it happened.

A few days later, Kammermann, the Jewish Policeman, approached us and asked if we would volunteer to join a group that was burying a Jewish woman who had been shot not far from the camp. We were given spades and marched to the area designated. We soon came to a potato field and saw, lying on the ground, a young girl, dead, covered with dried blood, bullet wounds in her head and bosom. It was our young girl. Her bread and empty milk pitcher were nearby.

Kammermann told us that he had been ordered to have the girl buried where she died. We dug a grave in a corner of the field near an old willow tree. As we laid her in the

grave, we wept unashamedly. We were literally unable to cover her with the earth, and then one of the men climbed into the grave and covered her face with a cloth. Then we filled the grave.

But the Jews, even dead, did not rest easily. That same day, the owner of the field came to us and asked that the dead girl be removed, for he did not want a corpse on his ground. We tried to convince him that she could not bother him and that the grave would not interfere with his farming. We even offered to pay him for the privilege of burying her there. But he refused to listen. Within twenty-four hours he returned with a note from the Germans ordering us to remove the body. We carried her to the woods near the mass pits, dug a separate grave and laid her to her final rest.

Meanwhile, we received fewer and fewer visits from the Jews in the woods. The Germans were combing the area and were gradually killing off refugees. At about this time, Janek came to us, asking if we knew the whereabouts of some of his group who had disappeared. He was left with only four, but felt that the others still lived. We talked a while and then he left. None of the missing children ever showed up and I met Janek himself only one time more.

Although we no longer had the children to think about, we became attached to a "substitute," a little 4-year-old girl named Rachele Kupferberg, who had been left with Gentile foster parents, apparently unwilling to keep her any longer. The child was found crying in the middle of our courtyard, with a note on her dress, "Rachele Kupferberg, 4-years-old." We did not know what to do with her for she was too young to place in a hide-out. We decided to put her in an "upstairs" area of one of the barracks and here the Jews played with her, remembering the days when they enjoyed themselves with their children.

Not a day passed without some special event. One after-

noon, the Ukrainian workers rushed to the fence, smiling maliciously as though waiting for something evil to happen. We were curious and expected the worst. Had the Gestapo come for us? We looked out the window and saw an elderly peasant on the road, carrying a child. A German Policeman and two Ukrainian militiamen followed behind, together with a young peasant woman who was weeping copious tears. We soon learned what had happened.

The young woman, married, had borne this child to a Jew a year ago. The Gestapo heard of the case, ascertained that the child was illegitimate, of Jewish blood and therefore to be destroyed. The elderly peasant was the child's grandfather. The woman cried that she no longer was involved with the child's father and begged that her infant be spared. We were told the next day that the child was shot by the Germans in the Jewish cemetery.

Hyrawka

Near our camp was an agricultural area which had once served as a camp where Jews planted flowers and vegetables and had, in the course of this work, managed to remain in this area, without being transferred. Once, 350 Jewish boys and girls were employed; the area was called Hyrawka. Now, only ten Jewish workers remained. The agricultural center had been specifically established to keep the Jews constantly busy. Its director was a Mr. Millbusch. He was a liberal German who had been responsible for the project, giving the Jews the entire area, stretching from a brewery to the new Jewish cemetery of Drohobycz. The actual leadership was under two Jews: Altman and Dr. Reitman. Altman was bad, but Reitman was evil and worse.

When the Jews took over, they found two ancient brewing houses with deep cellars. One of the houses was converted to a store and the other to a sort of barn for cattle. In six months, the area had been so wonderfully developed and organized that they reflected well on Jewish abilities.

There were dozens of plants, vegetables and herbs being grown successfully in the most modern manner. Horses, cattle and sheep breeding was going on apace. Rabbits were raised and bee hives flourished. The Jews also established workshops—for glaziers, locksmiths, plumbers and brush makers. There was a pottery shop for pots and vases. Day and night, the 350 Jews worked hard and showed the world that, given the opportunity, they could do as well

as any people on earth.

From time to time, the Germans visited the area and brought guests with them, making the center a show place. Foreign journalists came here, too, and if anyone reads my words later, it would be interesting for him to learn how the workers were repaid for their efforts by the Germans.

I cannot recall the exact date—it was probably in April, 1943—but Mellbusch, who was the only non-Jewish employee of the project, issued a special order, imposed upon by the Security Police: All Jews were to be moved to the pottery and ceramic works for brick making and ordered to abandon the gardening and cattle chores.

The youngsters reacted violently. The boys were sadly reluctant to leave their fields and the girls hugged the animals, for they had become attached to them.

Their crying aroused the passing Ukrainians and Poles who stopped to look and wondered why there was so much excitement. They could not understand that these Jews had taken pride in their work. Now that they were being shifted, they felt even more useless than those who waited for death in the ghettos. Some of the youngsters threatened suicide but were talked out of it by Luki Schiller. Schiller was born to a Jew who had converted to Christianity, and was himself a Christian. He was considered Jewish by the Germans and was forced to wear an armband.

Schiller was a grandson of Dr. Feuerstein and thus a member of the Feuerstein and Gartenberg families, the Galician "Rothschilds," who had done so much for the town of Drohobycz.

He was the only one of the group who did not complain about the shift. The ten Jews who remained in the agricultural fields were to leave after they had trained their replacements. This small unit was near us and part of us, so far as we were concerned. We used to talk together, discuss our situation and exchange gossip.

The Liquidation of the "W" Camps

As the day begins to dawn, we rise from our beds and hear the cries of "Roll-Call! Roll-Call!" We are tired and have the impression that we have only recently gone to bed. Have we heard these ominous words or did we dream them? But they have been part of no dream; they are real.

We hear heavy footsteps coming close to our room. A German appears at the door and calls out, "Roll-Call!" We dress quickly and fall out and see that the entire camp is surrounded by German Police, Ukrainian militiamen and police dogs. We were counted, (82) and led to the court prison, together with the ten others from the "Hyrawka Garden." My brother and I are placed in cell Number 2. It is overcrowded and I can hardly move about. The entire prison is jammed, for all W camps seem to have been dissolved and hundreds of Jews are here.

One of the two Jewish Police, brought here with us, climbs up on the shoulders of a comrade and scratches the following on the cell wall: "I, Bernhard Hallemann, was

taken here today, Tueday, on the 20th of July, 1943, the 17th of Tammuz 5703 in the Jewish era. The day of my execution will probably be the 22nd or 23rd of July."

Although many prisoners engraved such inscriptions on the walls, this one remains clear in my mind because of two errors. The writer did not die on the 22nd or 23rd, but on the 20th, the day of his capture. And he was not shot.

On the afternoon of the day we were imprisoned, we were ordered to fall out of our cells into the corridor. Here, Hallemann met a Ukrainian militiamen with whom he had served as a cop. The Ukrainian secretly handed Hallemann a badge of the Ukrainian secret police and when we were driven back to our cells, Hallemann was not among us. The guards had mistaken him for a Ukrainian and he would have been able to escape if he had the courage to walk out of the prison. Instead, he was full of fear and dawdled about. The Germans picked him up, after he acted suspicious, and then they beat him. The same day he died of the beating.

Hallemann was whipped to death, but other inmates were beaten regularly, although they were not killed. Now and again, some Jews tried to escape, difficult though it was. When they were recaptured, the beatings were given. Still, this was to be expected.

Meanwhile, I was able to reflect on the well-known thought that the old are more afraid of death than the young. For the past five months, I had been living with older people; in this cell, I was among youngsters. When I moved about with the older folks, I heard lamenting and wailing. Now, I listened mainly to merry young men singing Jewish folk songs. The handful of old people squatted in corners and wept. The young prisoners managed to get together some money to bribe the wardens and get brandy, food and cigarettes. They ate heartily and drank joyously and toasted themselves and hoped they could live in Palestine, a free Jewish Homeland. They called for the defeat and

death of Hitler. These lucky, or unlucky, depending on how one looked at it, men whose fiancees were also in jail, managed to bribe wardens to allow them a few minutes with their girls. Their meetings were brave and touching.

Once, in the prison hall, I saw a young couple talking together. He was about 22 and she 20. They were attractive and healthy. They assured each other they had no fear of the future, and they maintained a courageous front. But suddenly, as they looked into one another's eyes, tears flowed and they as much said—without words—what they really felt. The warden gave them five minutes and then sent them back to the cells. As they returned, they called out to each other, "Goodbye, may we meet in a better world."

They never saw each other again.

I, too, bribed the wardens and visited the various cells, hoping to find some friends. In one of them, I met Janek, the boy who had led the children in the forest. He had been caught and jailed and he told me of a dream of his. His mother had come to him in that dream. She was dressed in white and her face was pale. She had reproached him for having jumped out of the box car and leaving her alone. He had asked her to forgive him. As he told me the substance of this dream, I looked at him. He was tired, broken in spirit and hungry. Sitting beside him were other youngsters, originally from his group. They were even more beaten than he and could hardly lift their heads.

One of the men in our cell, Romek Miodownik, had a revolver with three bullets and planned to shoot two Germans and then himself when the time for his execution would come. He was an intelligent young man in his twenties and did not relish the lamenting of the old people and the grim humor of the youngsters. He was not afraid of death, but he did become angry at the thought that Jews should die in so mean and miserable a manner.

"Will mankind ever overcome its shame that it has permitted millions and millions of people to die? And will it ever understand how this happened without the victims offering any resistance?" he cried. "What will history think of us? What will the Jewish historians of the future say of us? We die like sheep! We do not fight!"

The others tried to calm him and, at the same time, to give excuses for their behavior. "How can we stand against the might of a people that has beaten Poland, Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium, France, Yugoslavia and Greece?" one man called out. "How can we fight effectively against any enemy that has attacked mighty Russia?"

Another said, "Why don't the Russian prisoners resist? Why didn't the 12,000 Polish officers of Katyn resist? They have been trained to fight—and look at them. What can we do—who don't know how to use weapons, what can our wives and children do?"

But Miodownik remained unconvinced. He believed in Jewish heroism and courage. He had faith in the spirit of the Hasmoneans and Bar Kochba.

On a Thursday afternoon, the killings began. The Germans started with cell number 1, and ten people were led into the prison office. An hour later, our turn was to come. Miodownik was among the first ten. Five minutes later, the sharp report of a pistol sounded; then we waited for a second and a third, according to his plan. But we heard no further shots. We were later told that a Ukrainian, standing next to Miodownik, had noticed that he had moved toward his pistol and had grabbed Miodownik's hand. The first bullet was deflected and that was that.

When our cell door was opened, we thought our time had come. But instead a German officer, holding a slip of paper in his hand, called out five names. My brother and I were on this list. We were the only two from the cell on the list. We were ordered to step into the corridor and we

waited until the German found the other men on the list. They were Moses Backenroth, Saul Barsam, and a Dr. Spiro from Warsaw who, in the last few years had lived in Drohobycz.

Slowly and gradually, we learned that the five of us had been selected as good workers and were to report to an establishment where workers were badly needed. The man who ran the place had good Gestapo connections, and, as a result, could obtain men like us when he needed them.

But Dr. Spiro refused to report for work.

"What do you mean, you won't go?" the prison director said. "Tomorrow, everybody here will be executed, and you will be alive."

"I want to be executed and will not leave," Dr. Spiro said.

His action puzzled and amazed the director, who went into a huddle with a Gestapo man and told him what was happening.

The German took the same tack. "Why don't you want to leave this prison?" he asked. "You will be liberated if you do."

Dr. Spiro replied, "I don't believe that. Perhaps my death will be delayed three or four weeks. But I don't need these extra weeks to prolong my misery. This way, everything will be finished in twelve or fourteen hours. I am not interested in this extra time."

"You are right, Jew," the German said. We, in any case, went along with the director, as he ordered, and we wondered uneasily whether Dr. Spiro was right in what he said.

We were taken to the Beskiden Camp and as we went we saw that the streets which had been full of Jews, were empty. In the camp we met with Backenroth, the engineer and other Jews who told us that Dr. Ruhrberg, the former Vice President of the Jewish Council of Drohobycz, and his wife, were here in Drohobycz. They were shot that same day.

Why There Was No Resistance

Why didn't we resist? What crushed us was the fact that we were opposed by an implacable foe in possession of modern weapons. The automatic machine guns, tanks, and airplanes were so overwhelming that Hitler was able to carry out his devilish plan of annihilation.

I feel that if we had pistols and rifles, we might have fought our way to freedom. Even if we had been destroyed, we would have managed to take thousands of Germans with us. We would have defended our wives and children, our mothers and fathers, to our last breath.

But the machine guns, which spewed hundreds of bullets a minute, the huge tanks, and fighter planes, made any uprising impossible from its inception.

We were not alone in our helplessness. The nations of Europe, conquered by Hitler, were equally weak. Could we accomplish what all the peoples of Europe could not? We, the ghetto Jews? After all, we had been raised not to fight but to live by the spirit, according to the Lord's word.

Moreover, the Germans acted against us in isolated fash-

ion. They picked us off, group by group, ghetto by ghetto, Jew by Jew. As one group was liquidated, another was permitted to live. Then the survivors were destroyed. In this way, the Germans always had Jews working for them while others were being killed off.

Added to all this was the sad realization that the Ukrainians and Poles among whom we lived, were eager to cooperate with the Germans in wiping us out. Their animal instincts were aroused. Even those Poles who would not persecute the Jews were glad to be rid of us because our doctors, lawyers, engineers and businessmen represented competition to them. They sat by contentedly as we were being massacred.

We could not hope to receive weapons from them; on the contrary, when they discovered we had guns, we were denounced and turned over to the German authorities.

When our young men asked the Polish partisans to join with them in acts of sabotage, the Poles said they were unwilling to join with Jews. They felt that they had a chance to outlive the war while the Jews would all be killed before peace came.

In the meantime, we were convinced, after the German catastrophe at Stalingrad in the winter of 1942, that the war would soon come to a close. We felt that only a short time remained for us to suffer. We were confident that the German war machine must soon break down.

As I reflect on my optimism that the war would soon be ending, I wonder why I was so hopeful. I can only guess, at this point, that Dr. Freud has explained the psychological attitude I adopted. If a man wants desperately enough to see something happen, he is unwilling to recognize the obstacles that stand in his path. I overlooked all the signs which opposed my view. I was unable to see clearly that the German breakdown would be delayed.

Naftali Backenroth

Naftali Backenroth was a well educated man who had studied agriculture, chemistry, geology and engineering. At the age of 23, he had been appointed a lecturer at a polytechnical school in France and in 1929 had worked on a plan to connect the Mediterranean with the Red Sea by canal. He had won a prize for his plan, although, of course, nothing came of it. He was an attractive-looking man, who moved swiftly and purposefully. He was popular in Drohobycz and liked. He was involved in studies of the naphtha works in Drohobycz when war came in 1939. When the Germans came in 1941, they ordered Jewish intellectuals to clean the prison latrines, the barracks and other municipal buildings. Backenroth was one of those doing this dirty work. His co-workers were doctors, lawyers, professors and engineers. They did not relish the chores given them but Backenroth was unlike them. He said, "Let us get on with the work and finish it as soon as possible."

The Germans noticed that he was a hard worker and when they discovered he was an agricultural student, he was sent to work in the garden of a Gestapo officer. In this fashion, he made contact with the Gestapo and soon was able to do some favors for his fellow Jews. At about that time, Jews were disappearing in a black motor car and nobody knew where they were being driven. It was Backenroth who found out they were being imprisoned in the

cellar of the Gestapo building, to be shot the following day. Backenroth managed to get some of them saved. As more and more Germans came to live in Drohobycz and took over apartments and houses in which to live, Backenroth had more and more work to do, and the Germans were very pleased with the way in which he laid out and took care of their gardens. He became popular with them too, and gained a measure of influence over them.

Backenroth was an honest man and a serious one. He did not especially care about his own comfort and the Germans as well as the Jews respected him. When he saved Jews, he did not ask for any gifts or thanks. Even those who tried to give him money or presents soon learned that he would not accept a thing from them.

Then Backenroth, in the midst of mounting trouble and misery, made a startling proposal to the Germans. He offered to organize a Jewish work group to complete projects which would be of permanent value, even after the Germans left the country. He proposed to build hot-houses movie houses, riding schools, social clubs and gardens. When the Gestapo agreed, Backenroth obtained 700 workers and 100 administrative officers. He involved nearly 25 percent of all the Jews and established workshops where children could learn various skills. Until March, 1943, all the people working with Backenroth were relatively secure and under no persecution. Living conditions were not bad and the food was adequate. While Jews elsewhere—since mid-1942—were badly off, in Drohobycz, under Backenroth, life was semi-decent. He was so successful in his management that the property of the village Jews—outside of Drohobycz—was handled by the Jews in the village. The village Jews were allowed to remain on their property and they had to produce a good harvest, but at least they were permitted to keep part of it, and Backenroth saw to it that some was distributed among the Jewish workers in Drohobycz. Under

his care, the village Jews also felt safer and gradually, all the Jews in the vicinity came to Backenroth with their problems. He helped everyone and was soon a leader, an important leader, among them.

Meanwhile, in his own house, there was misery and poverty. He did not take advantage of his leadership to improve the lot of his own family. They had dry bread and black ersatz coffee. He was convinced that his family had to live like the Jews who were worse off. In order for me to describe every noble thing he did would take an entire book. But for the future historians of this era, I should like to tell this story, which I heard from Dr. Isidor Friedmann, who is in the hide-out with me.

In the winter of 1941-1942, Dr. Friedmann was passing through Mickiewicza Street to go to work in the library of the Jesuit monastery from Chyrow, where he was helping assort the books with Professor Bruno Schulz. He saw a column of trucks loaded with machine guns and manned by Gestapo men. The Gestapo crew was drunk and Backenroth was standing there talking with them, asking them and pleading with them not to undertake the Action they were planning against the Jews in Turka-on-the-Stryj. The Gestapo men were laughing and paying no attention to Backenroth, until one of them said something about "Martel cognac, but only genuine Martel cognac." Obviously, for the first time, the Germans wanted something from the Jew. Backenroth asked them to wait and not act. He would bring them what they wanted. He disappeared for a while and then came back with two bottles of the genuine pre-war cognac they wanted. That day, 300 Jews were killed in Turka and not 500 as planned, and Backenroth was able to say that 200 were saved—100 Jews for each bottle of the cognac. That was our value at this period!

When the time came for the liquidation of the ghetto, everyone watched out for himself and those who had the

contacts and influence, managed to escape. The Jews had no leaders left, for all had gone—all except Backenroth. Alone, with his family, he stayed in the ghetto. When the ghetto was wiped out, he was caught by Gestapo men who did not know him, and he was imprisoned. When the Drohobycz Gestapo heard of his capture, they came to release him. He refused their offer. He said he would leave only if 100 Jews were let out with him. The Gestapo acceded to his wishes and freed 100 Jews together with him.

When the liquidation came, the Jews finally lost all hope of survival. Morale broke down and defeatism set in. Even Backenroth lost his courage and he became pathetic, listless, and beaten.

I remember one incident of this period. It was the last time I saw Backenroth, Thursday, July 22, 1943, when I was brought, with others, to Beskiden Camp. The Germans had been killing Jews here and the survivors were depressed and dejected. Backenroth stood in the center of a crowd of Jews and close to him was a Mrs. Nadel, who pleaded with him to help save her two children who were in prison. Backenroth simply stood there, listening to her, but not responding. Was he overcome by the helplessness of the situation? Was he now completely powerless? In any event, Backenroth merely remained standing, resigned to whatever fate would come. Finally, Mr. Nadel, who had been standing there silently himself, said, in a trembling voice, "Sir, at least save one child."

These words, somehow, touched Backenroth. He pulled himself together, ran to the gate, disappeared and an hour later returned with two children. He allowed them to enter the gate into the camp and then he disappeared. The children came to their parents and wept with joy.* That very day, when Backenroth made his final saving gesture, was the day before the 20th of Tammuz, the day of the death of Theodor Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism.

Beskiden, Cellar and Liberation

There were about 200 Jewish families, totalling about 700 Jews in Beskiden. All the Jews worked in the naphtha refineries and workshops. They worked all day and returned to the camp in the evening. The camp was a small ghetto, for both women and men labored here and everyone was grim. Every Jew had at least one relative in jail, and executions were taking place regularly. My brother and I remained here, working in the naphtha refineries. The days and weeks passed in great danger. One particular day, my brother and I were working at the refinery in Derezyce and we saw a worker from Schodnica passing by, a Pole named Stanislaus Nendza. We asked him if he could find a place for us. At first, Nendza refused to help us, but he did tell us that he had built a hiding-place under a stable, with his friend Francizek Janiewski, where he had already hidden three Jews. He had no objection to hiding another two Jews he knew, but first he wanted to talk it over with his neighbor and his wife. Two days later, we met Nendza again and he told us he had discussed the matter with the

three hidden Jews and his own people and he invited us to join him. He wanted a sum of money which we were able to pay. The entire negotiation, which was so significant to us, took only ten minutes.

On a Sunday, we crept out of the camp and walked toward Schodnica. We walked all night until we reached the Carpathian Mountains, where we hid in a ravine during the day. The following evening we continued our march until we reached Nendza's house, which was situated in a naphtha pit. We entered quickly and saw a comfortable home, with fine furniture, a child's cradle, pictures on the walls and a cat. We had been unaccustomed to such comforts. When everyone was assured that all was safe, we were led to a stable with a hiding place beneath it. Part of the stable was partitioned off for a pig sty. Our host drove out a pig, pushed away the straw, lifted a board and opened a trap. We saw an opening just large enough for one person to creep through. Nendza told us to go down. One by one we did so. The opening was shut again and the plank covered us. We heard the straw being replaced and the pig being driven back into the sty. A candle was lit. There was some light now and we could see where we were. It was here where we were to live.

Among the Jews who lived here during this period, I knew only Esther Backenroth. The others were Dr. Friedmann and Mrs. Luisa Mahler, the widow of Dr. Mahler.

Life was difficult for all of them. They knew they were passing time helplessly and implacably only because they could check off the days on the calendar. Otherwise, life stopped. All they did was wait . . . wait. The summer passed . . . and then autumn . . . and winter. Soon spring would come and their only evidence of it would be the calendar.

If they forgot to strike a day off the calendar, that day did not exist. There were no lights at all and they could

only imagine the loveliness of the sky outside and overhead. During this year, they could see neither sky nor sun; neither the moon nor the stars, the snow nor the rain, the blossoms nor the fruit.

Their lives were monotonous but the days rolled on. One day resembled the one before—and the one after. Each day was like drops of rain, falling . . . falling. Once, every day had brought its own excitement. The people had suffered pain and fear of death . . . and had experienced hope, too. Here, in this cellar, there was peace of a sort. The inmates respected one another and kept telling one another that the day would come when they would be truly safe and would be permitted to emerge from the darkness.

Yet even as they hid here, some exciting things had been happening on the outside.

Two Jewish girls, who had hidden in Schodnica, had been discovered. No one had looked for them. They had been found through mere chance. Two firemen had noticed that smoke was coming from a chimney in one of the houses in town. They feared a fire and broke into the house. They discovered that an oven had been heated to make bread, but the men were not satisfied with what they saw. They investigated further and pulled out the two girls hiding in the room. That very day, the peasant woman and the two girls were executed.

This in itself was a frightening tale, but a little while later, another event took place. A small group of young Jews, twenty in all, had armed themselves and pushed their way through the woods. Just as they were approaching Schodnica, the Germans saw them. There was a battle in the woods between the Jewish partisans and the Germans. Although many of the Jews managed to escape, scores of Germans were killed and wounded. The Jews who were caught were savagely tortured and murdered before the eyes of the villagers.

These activities led the natives to talk about the Jews and the Ukrainians decided to search all the houses which they suspected might be hiding Jews. The Jews lived now in utter fear. For in their landlord's house there lived a Ukrainian militia man named Dublynicz and he had begun to notice something odd about the stable. The landlords suspected that he had seen them bringing pots of food to the stable.

Days of terrible anxiety passed. The Jews prayed that their landlords would not lose their nerve, that they would hold out. At about this time, an aunt of the landlord's came to visit and took their child away. She felt that if her niece was willing to take a chance with the Jews their child should not be made to suffer if they were caught.

The Carpathian Mountain chain stretches like a protective rampart across Middle Europe. The icy Eastern winds from Siberia go no further than the Carpathians and in the stable and in the cellar the winter was extremely severe. The huge, ancient trees cracked in the forest and the snow was very deep. The world seemed to be devoured by the ice giant. The stable was covered with snow, but inside it was quite warm. The cold air was fresher than the summer air. The Jews could live with a feeling of security now and thus they remained: dead to the world above them. They knew they could not emerge until the war ended and they speculated on the progress of the fighting and felt that the end would soon approach.

In mid-winter there was more trouble. Transmission straps in the workshops of the naphtha pits had been stolen. The Germans decided to search the homes of all the men who worked there, and as Janiewski, one of the landlords, was a technician at the pits, it appeared that the hideout would soon be found.

It must be said that the people who were hiding the Jews, while frightened, never considered abandoning them. When

the Jews offered to go into the woods, the landlords rejected their offer, saying that the cold air in the woods would kill them. The Jews could not but help appreciate the good fellowship of their landlords. At the outset of the adventure, it is possible that the landlords had helped the Jews for monetary gain. But now they all were, so to speak, a single community. The Jews never heard the landlords complain about them and they always tried to perk up the spirits of the Jews. Still, when the search began, the landlords fled to the woods, leaving their wives behind.

The Jews hidden in the stable were seldom visited by the women, who came every third day with the necessary supplies. In the interim, the Jews wondered and worried and prayed. Finally, the searchers came closer and closer. The police started to search the house and cellar of Janiewski. By this time, the two men who had gone into the woods had been captured and jailed. They had also been released because of their good behavior and clean records and also because one of the women had thought quickly. She had taken a can of gasoline to the police, gave it up and said that the man had run away because they knew it was against the law for them to hoard the gasoline. The police accepted the excuse and so this danger vanished.

Meanwhile, during this tense period, one of the women in the cellar, Mrs. Mahler, had become seriously ill. She grew terribly weak and was unable to rise from her bed. She had to be fed and washed by Esther Backenroth. The only food available was carrot juice which had been warmed over in a small tin pot held over a candle. Gradualy, Mrs. Mahler grew weaker and weaker and one day was unable to talk at all.

When I left the cellar after one of my trips there, I asked a doctor in Boryslaw about Mrs. Mahler's symptoms as I understood them. He told me that there were no hopes for her recovery. So what was to be done with her?

The landlords already were planning on her burial and were thinking as to how to go about it. Then a strange thing happened. After a week, the sick woman asked for a glass of milk. There was no milk, so we gave her more carrot juice. Within an hour she wanted more. In the evening, when the landlords came, the Jews asked them for a little milk, and when they brought it, Mrs. Mahler drank it eagerly and began to talk. Two weeks later, she arose and began washing herself. A fortnight after that, she recovered —thanks to Esther Backenroth's self-sacrificing nursing.

A few quiet weeks followed. The cellar inhabitants read books and newspapers, played chess and cards, solved mathematical problems and crossword puzzles and did bodily exercises to keep in decent physicial trim. They were, however, running out of money so they gradually gave their hosts all the clothing they had, except the clothes they wore. They were also compelled to break their gold teeth and bridges in their mouths in the hope that they—plus the clothes—could be sold, should they need money before they were freed.

In the first week of life in the cellar, we experienced our first surprise. A four-day period elapsed before the landlords showed up. Had something happened to them? Had they themselves escaped? Would we now starve? Everyone listened for noises wondering whether the Angel of Death had passed by. And then, one day, we heard shots and screams . . . and then there was silence again. What was going on? God, what was happening? Imaginations ran rampant. And then, finally, after four days, one of the landlords came down and reported on what had happened.

A boy had arrived in Schodnica, a 10-year-old named Noah Feuerberg. With the sure instinct of a carrion, a Volks-German named Beck had sensed that the boy was Jewish. The German walked up to the youngster as the boy came to

Schodnica and had grabbed him. The lad defended himself but Beck overcame him and dragged him to our landlord's house and demanded that he be kept there until the police arrived. Normally, Nendza would have allowed the boy to escape, but he was afraid that if the area were searched, the Jews hiding there would be discovered. Nendza therefore said nothing. He fed the boy who, for a moment, forgot he was in peril and sat back relaxed. Meanwhile, however, the police were on their way to the house. When Beck arrived with the police, he charged the landlords with treating the Jewish child too well. The Germans shot and killed the boy behind our stable and ordered the landlords to dig his grave. Thus the boy became a silent neighbor, lying in the ground near his Jewish brothers who, for the moment, were still alive.

The Feuerberg boy's life story, brief though it was, had its own special interest. He was not the natural son of the shoemaker, Don Feuerberg, for Feuerberg had no children. But years earlier, a poor wandering woman from Lublin had passed through the town with a small boy and the woman had stopped at Feuerberg's and asked for permission to rest awhile. He, of course, granted her wish, and then suddenly the woman vanished, leaving the child behind. No one ever saw her again and Feuerberg raised the boy, naming him Noah and taught him that he was a Jew. The happy years of his childhood culminated in the Nazi terror and all the Jews he knew were killed. He was driven from Schodnica to the ghetto of Boryslaw and he managed to escape and drift back to Schodnica—where he met his fate. Thus, our silent neighbor was one whose history we all knew, and we mourned his passing. Somehow, we felt that he had died on our behalf, and we could not banish the thought of him; nor could we drive the sound of his weeping from our minds.

Trouble, however, was not yet over. A few days later, water flooded the area. It occurred in the morning when

everyone woke up and realized that the waters were rising in the hideout, due to the overflowing of the nearby river which was thawing out. Each day, water had to be scooped out, for hours on end. The biggest water breakthrough left the hiding area half inundated. The bedstead on the floor was now useless and even the upper section of the bed was wet. If one of the landlords had not been around, all the hiding Jews would have been drowned, for he opened the trap door and helped out in the crisis. The water finally receded and this danger was beaten back. My brother and I then decided to return to Beskiden in Boryslaw and return to this area only during the very hot days. We also planned to hide here when life on the outside turned very dangerous: when there would be shootings planned and other types of persecution.

Now it is August, 1944. There are no terrorists walking the streets any longer, or combing the woods or searching out Jews, because there are none left. From time to time, trucks rumble through the streets in the direction of the Carpathians, but they are no longer loaded with Jews and no longer roll to the execution areas. At first only a few trucks roll westward, but then they come from all directions, full of German soldiers. By day and night, artillery thunders, deep in the Carpathians. We hear that Brody has fallen, Tarnopol captured. Now Lemberg has been taken. A chain of happy events. Our hearts beat swiftly.

The once-mighty German army is being beaten to its knees. This is the army that was to establish a thousand-year Nazi-Reich. Now they are war-tired, whipped, minus leaders. The world will soon be free again. Will we live to see it? Millions of Jews have prayed for this day. They were, many of them, hoping to live long enough to see the end of Hitlerism. Yet with all this mounting excitement, we realize how terribly alone we are. To whom do we now

belong? Where are we to go?

When these German armies had proudly moved toward the East, Jewish life was flowering in the towns of Poland. It was a rich, happy country, fertile and peaceful, full of hard-working Jews, proud Jewish communities which were cultural Jewish centers that made Jews everywhere aware of the beauty and value of the Jewish heritage. But now? What was left? Out of the cellars there emerged a few poor, half-starved, ragged, broken-down human beings—a wretched remainder of a once-flourishing proud and happy people.

How terribly lonely we are! How ardently we had awaited this day of victory. We felt, most deeply and honestly, that we would be utterly grateful to get out of our underground hideaway. But now, what?

We are confronted by a collapsing civilization. The smoky ruins of the liquidated ghettos stand out against Europe's violated sky. The ruins look back at us and tell us that our wives and children, mothers and fathers, friends and relatives—all, all have perished and Judaism has practically ceased to exist.

We tell ourselves, "What do we want here? We are miserable remnants of a great people. Look at us now! Vanish! Disappear!"

Now it is Tuesday, August 8, 1944, 7 A.M. Benek, the 16-year-old son of Janiewski, opens the trap door and cries down to us, "You are liberated! The Allied troops are marching in!"

We remain at the bedsteads. It seems one waits for the other to make the first move. Then the two landlords break into loud cries and our lethargy vanishes. With tears of joy, they are entering the stable. They realize that we are saved and their long watch is over.

Slowly, we climb upwards, to the earth, to the sun, to the sky.

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Hebrew College
Brookline, Massachusetts

In Memory Of
JACK Y. GORDON
my dear brother-in-law
by
Mrs. Mollie F. Becker

About the Author . . .



Rabbi Leon Thorne, the author of this moving account of the survival of a Jew during the violent Hitler era in Europe, lived most of his life in the area he describes so vividly in *Out of the Ashes.* He was born in Schodnica, near Drohobycz in Poland. His family, deeply pious, owned and operated oil wells in the Carpathian Mountains in Poland for more than 100 years.

Deeply grounded in Jewish learning and scholarship, Rabbi Thorne was ordained as a rabbi at the age of 19. He continued his religious studies at the Jewish Theological Seminaries of Vienna, Austria and Breslau, Germany. He pursued his general education at the universities of Vienna, Breslau and Wuerzburg and earned his Ph.D. at Wuerzburg, Germany. He majored in philosophy, history and pedagogy.

He served as a spiritual leader in Pomerania in Poland and while he led the Jews in that area, he wrote an important volume on Jewish philosophy entitled *Die Eschatologie und Transcendente Vergeltung.*

What Rabbi Thorne had to live through during World War II is vividly depicted in *Out of the Ashes.* Upon his liberation in August 1944, he was commissioned a Captain and served as a Chaplain in the Polish Free Army. He was one of the first members of the "Central Committee of the Jews from Poland" in Lublin. It was the purpose of this organization to rebuild and reconstitute the Jewish communities of Poland that had been destroyed by the Nazis.

From 1946 to 1948, he was the rabbi of the liberated Jews in Frankfort-on-Main in Germany and was an editor of the important Jewish periodical *Jeshurun.* In 1948, Rabbi Thorne emigrated to the United States, where he has continued his rabbinic and literary activities.