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CRITICAL TRANSLATION

A teacher and his students: child Holocaust testimonies from early postwar Polish Bytom

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ABSTRACT

The document presented here was created in 1945 in Bytom, Poland. It contains testimonies by Holocaust survivor children collected and put down in a notebook by their survivor teacher, Shlomo Tsam, in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust. The testimonies shed light on Jewish children's experience in Eastern Europe during the Holocaust, describing oppression, flight, and survival in the words of the weakest segment of Jewish communities – children. The testimonies provide raw data on the encounters between Jews and non-Jews in the territories in which the “Final Solution” was carried out. It is thus an important source contributing to the burgeoning research on the involvement of local populations in the murder of the Jews, on one hand, and in saving Jews, on the other. The creation of this document, one of several collections of Jewish survivor children's testimonies produced in the immediate postwar years, is also indicative of post-Holocaust Jewish sensibilities and concerns regarding surviving children.

KEYWORDS

Bytom; Poland; Shlomo Tsam; child Holocaust testimonies; early postwar period; Yiddish Institute for Jewish Research (YIVO); Hebrew school; Nazis; Jews; persecution; Lwów; Stanisławów; Tarnopol; Wołyn; pogrom; trauma hidden children; ghetto; witness

In 1945, Shlomo Tsam (1911–77), a Holocaust survivor and headteacher of the local Hebrew School in Polish Bytom, wrote down the testimonies of 42 of his pupils – all child Holocaust survivors – in a Yiddish manuscript that he titled “What Stories Do Children Tell?” (“Un vos dertseyln kinder?”). He probably completed the manuscript in a displaced person (DP) camp in Germany and sent it to the Central Jewish Historical Commission (CJHC) in Poland. There, the notebook was broken up into separate testimonies that were typed and filed in the archive as part of the CJHC's testimony collection.¹ We discovered Tsam's notebook in the early twenty-first century in the Hersch Wasser collection at the Institute for Jewish Research (YIVO) Archives in New York.²

Neither Tsam's background nor the methodology he used in collecting his charges' stories is clear. There are no notes about these questions, and none of the children concerned whom we managed to trace remembered anything about testifying, or even about Tsam, although they did recognize the survival stories as their own. Likewise, it is not entirely clear whether Tsam wrote down the children's stories in Poland or in Germany.³ The title page contains the word “Germany” in Yiddish script (*daytshland*),

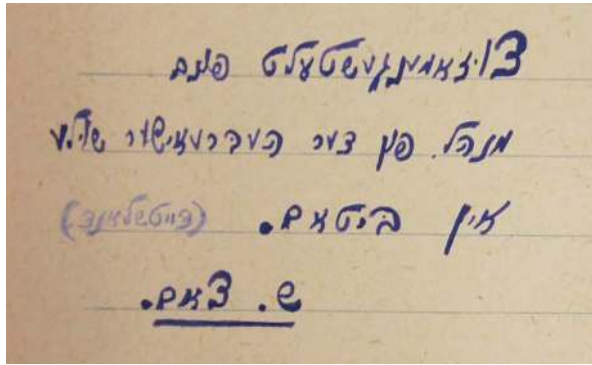


Figure 1. Detail from the title page of Tsam's manuscript.

albeit in fainter ink than the rest of the information on that page (Figure 1); this could indicate that the notebook was completed in Germany.⁴

What we do know is that before World War II Shlomo Tsam lived in Rovno⁵ (then Poland), where he taught in the Tarbut School, a Hebrew-language gymnasium. Tsam and his family survived the war by hiding in the forest, where he joined the partisans. After their liberation, the Tsams – like other Polish families of the region – were deported from the area, which was going to become part of the USSR. Once in Silesian Bytom, which had recently become part of Poland, Tsam established and ran a Hebrew school, but as early as autumn 1945 he left the town for occupied Germany before eventually emigrating to the United States in July 1949, where he continued to work as a teacher until he succumbed to cancer in 1977.

Tsam's notebook contains 42 testimonies and an afterword entitled "Word to the Youth." Of the children whose fates Tsam included in his manuscript, there were 26 girls and 12 boys; four children wanted to remain anonymous, and Tsam notes that he respected their request.⁶ Given that many of the children survived in hiding or by assuming a non-Jewish identity, it is not surprising that the majority of the young survivors who feature in Tsam's manuscript are females. Circumcised Jewish boys risked discovery much more than girls. The children ranged in age from nine to 17, but most were teenagers (Table 1). This age profile reflects the poorer survival chances of younger children who could not work, depended more on adult protection, and were less mature, such that Nazi persecution and its consequences proved more lethal to them than to older children.

Almost all of them came from smaller towns or villages in the provinces of Lwów, Stanisławów, Tarnopol, and Wołyn, i.e. from what had been the eastern reaches of Poland. Most of the children survived in hiding or by passing themselves off as non-Jewish, and although many of them lost some family members, quite a few of them had at least one parent left when they arrived in Bytom.

Table 1. Age profile of the children in Tsam's collection.

Age	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Number	1	2	3	5	4	11	3	7	6

The children's socio-economic or religious background rarely emerges. Although we often learn the names of family members, in many cases the parents are often simply referred to as such, hence their first names remain obscure. Tsam wrote down his pupils' names and places of origin, but added their ages only later on, in pencil, whilst the rest of the manuscript is in blue ink. By contrast, child testimonies collected by Jewish organizations tend to display such key biographical data, obtained for identificatory and administrative reasons. Getting children's family details right was crucial to any attempt to bring together family members who lost each other during the Holocaust. Children could be traced by surviving family members or relatives through this personal information. Since most of Tsam's children had surviving family members, he probably saw no importance in giving complete biographical information.⁷

The children's stories focus on the destruction of their home communities in 1941–2 and on life on the run. There is very little information about life before the arrival of the Nazis, because the testimonies were meant to document the persecution suffered, not to provide a comprehensive biography. While each of the testimonies is personal and unique, there are a number of common characteristics and themes. The testimonies follow a chronological order, covering the events that led to the survival of the witness from the onset of Nazi persecution to liberation. Within these parameters, several topics recur. Testimonies describe violent acts of mass persecution (e.g. pogroms, *Aktionen*), and they talk about atrocities committed against individuals (e.g. beatings, torture, sexual abuse). The children saw neighbors, friends, and family members getting killed, sexually abused, humiliated, injured, or losing their minds; and of course the children themselves were often enough at the receiving end of violence. The stories also testify to the complex relationships between non-Jews and Jews during the Holocaust. Non-Jews' behavior and responses play an important part in many testimonies, because they were so crucial to the children's fate.

Today's readers may be taken aback by the apparent lack of emotion that seems to characterize many descriptions of loss and pain. This phenomenon occurs in most child testimonies of the time and calls for explanation.⁸ For many youngsters, bottling up their emotional responses may have become a survival strategy during the war, which was hard to let go of after liberation. The traumatic nature of the events can be inferred from the amount of detail given over to their description, from repetitions of expressions such as "before my eyes," or from the reiteration of crucial statements accompanying key events, utterances that may well have been etched onto the minds of the young at the time. And of course it was Tsam who wrote down his charges' stories, which means that there is no way of knowing to what extent he repeated what the young had divulged in their own words. He may have toned down emotional content in order to focus the reader's attention upon the narrated facts of persecution.

The dominant survival pattern involves flight or hiding, rather than imprisonment in ghettos or camps. The stories describe the initial displacement of families as well as subsequent events, such as the separation of family members during or after escape, attempts to hide in barns or forests, the adoption of false (non-Jewish) identities, and encounters with other Jewish victims and with non-Jews. Overall, the testimonies Tsam gathered illustrate that the children developed survival strategies displaying tenacity and resilience. Thus, sisters Busia, aged six at the time, and Shulamit, not yet four, had to fend for themselves after having lost their parents in the forest. "We both began to wander through the

villages,” recounted Busia. “Nobody begrudged us bread, but nobody let us stay overnight, so we learned to spend the night in a field or in an orchard, and sometimes, we used to steal into a cowshed.” D. G—n’s experience in the countryside was even tougher: “Nobody wanted to let me in and nobody wanted to give me a little piece of bread either,” he related, and he had to steal food in order to survive. “During that time,” his story continues, “I taught myself to eat raw chickens, beetroots, etc. I did not spend my nights in the same places that I spent my days. My [hiding] places were in haystacks, straw, broken boards, piles of rubbish.”

It is perhaps not surprising that the enormous hardships suffered, especially those of a directly physical nature such as hunger and cold, feature prominently in the narratives, whilst the portrayal of emotions such as fear, sadness, or rage is more erratic. Many testimonies end with liberation by the Red Army.

Tsam was not alone in collecting child survivor testimonies. In fact, this was a common undertaking in the immediate postwar years, when thousands of children’s testimonies were collected. Two big documentation projects were initiated by Jewish historical commissions: the CJHC in Poland and the Central Historical Commission in Munich (CHC) in occupied Germany.⁹ The commissions developed a questionnaire, published guidelines, sent out calls for testimonies, organized competitions, and published selections of testimonies. But, as Tsam’s work and that of other educators show, there was also a widespread grassroots interest in children’s experiences that transcended institutional collection efforts.¹⁰ For example Benjamin Tenenbaum collected essays from Jewish children in Polish orphanages in 1946, a selection of which he published.¹¹

Collecting children’s or young people’s life stories had become an important activity in twentieth-century East European Jewish society. Janusz Korczak, the famous Jewish educator in Poland, spread his child-centered ideology through publications and radio programs in which he asked children to write of their experiences and lives.¹² On a larger scale, YIVO, based in Vilna, organized three autobiographical competitions in the 1930s (1932, 1934, 1939). Teenagers and young people aged 14–22 were invited to write their autobiographies. Hundreds of young people, mostly from Eastern Europe, submitted their writings to these competitions.¹³ The focus on children and young people and the importance placed on the authentic voice of the child carried into the postwar world and informed the work done by historians and educators such as Tsam with survivor children.

By interviewing children and writing down their stories, teachers such as Tsam were thus reconnecting to prewar cultural norms and practices, but there were also pressing issues that informed their collection of testimonies in the postwar world. In 1945, the CJHC in Poland published a questionnaire and guidelines for the collection of testimonies from children. The goals set out in this document illustrate both historical and educational concerns. First, the questionnaire pointed out the need to document “the criminal Nazi activity” that aimed “to first morally corrupt and physically exterminate the young Jewish generation.” Second, it stressed the necessity to show “the courage and resourcefulness of the Jewish youth” which “to a certain degree ruined the Nazi plans.” Third, the document speaks of the aim to “establish the psychological and physical state of the Jewish youth after living for a period of several years under the conditions of the Nazi regime,” and to “gather information about their plans and aspirations.”¹⁴ Tsam may or may not have seen these guidelines, but they are reflected in his work.

It was obvious to the early collectors that children's testimonies would make a distinct contribution to the understanding of relations between Jews and non-Jews during the Holocaust. The aforementioned guidelines called for obtaining "material about the attitude of the surrounding society towards the Jews, about the positive and negative phenomena," as well as aiming to look at the possibility of Nazi influence on this behavior, "to determine how much the Nazi propaganda influenced the surrounding masses." Accepting the likelihood that interactions between Jews and non-Jews during the war were bound to influence postwar attitudes, the guidelines also called for exploring postwar Jewish children's "attitude to other nations." The children were seen as appropriate witnesses on this issue due to the direct and unapologetic nature of their testimonies. Maria Hochberg-Mariańska and Noe Grüss, who put together one of the earliest anthologies of children's testimonies, claimed that children expressed "their appreciation in words full of the warmest feelings" in cases where they had been fortunate enough to encounter a helping hand, and that, by the same token, they reported cruelty or lack of support in bitter words:

Every human gesture, even just the offering of a slice of bread or words of genuine sympathy, these heartfelt reactions in the terrible days of the Holocaust – none of this has been forgotten by these persecuted children. [...] In the same frank and straightforward way the children describe evil deeds and base people. [...] Bitterness and pain fill the children's recollections of those Poles who hunted them, betrayed them, and handed them over to the common enemy.¹⁵

Tsam's Bytom notebook is unique, because it encapsulates a moment in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust and at the confluence of several historical processes. It was a time when surviving Jews were beginning to give words to the traumatic events of the Holocaust – to collect survivor testimonies. It was also the beginning of the gathering of child survivors' stories and of the first attempts at their rehabilitation and education. The early postwar years also marked a specific historical moment – the transfer of Poles and many surviving Jews from the place where the children experienced and survived the Holocaust, which had been eastern Poland but was now the Soviet Union, to newly incorporated territories of western Poland in Silesia. All these moments come together in Tsam's notebook. The precarious situation of surviving Jews in Poland and their uncertainty about their future is also apparent here. The notebook gave permanence to the survival stories of a distinct group of youngsters, whom persecution and postwar upheavals had brought together in Bytom for a short time only, a makeshift survivors' community that ended when the children and Tsam himself continued their postwar odyssey. Most of them soon moved on to Palestine/Israel, the United States, and other destinations.

Having a distinct set of testimonies taken from children who were together at the time provides a better understanding of the challenges encountered by adult interlocutors, who were mostly survivors themselves. When entering a Hebrew classroom in postwar Poland, educators faced a group of children, many of whom had experienced horror. Some of those experiences were condensed in Tsam's notebook. And yet, educators strove, and at times successfully, to bring a semblance of normalcy into the lives of such children and to help them regain trust in humanity.

Research into postwar collections of testimonies is still in its early stages.¹⁶ The same is true of research on children's testimonies from that period.¹⁷ Existing research in this area

approaches child Holocaust testimonies from different perspectives. For instance, historians identify and portray collections of testimonies, place them in their historical context, and read them for historical information; psychologists work with aging survivors, tracing the legacy of the Holocaust for the lives of these people; and some cultural historians compare early postwar testimonies with follow-up testimonies given much later.¹⁸ Child Holocaust testimonies, with their often complex authorial layers and subsequent polyphony, constitute a particularly fruitful corpus for engaging with key concerns of testimony research such as authenticity, contextual determinants, and the role of the child witness emerging in our “era of the witness.”¹⁹ The notebook presented here – the entire manuscript in an English translation – lists the children’s name, home town, and age when they gave the testimony. Their stories will contribute to the further development of these fields.²⁰

The notebook also contributes to several fields of research on the Holocaust and its aftermath. It provides present-day researchers with a rich source describing the multifaceted ways Jewish children in Eastern Europe experienced the Final Solution. Similarly, it provides sources for research on the local population’s attitude towards Jews attempting to survive. Its very existence provides insight into post-Holocaust Jewish sensibilities in Europe, the place surviving Jewish children had in post-Holocaust Jewish reconstruction efforts, and the place of children in post-Holocaust consciousness.

What stories do children tell?²¹

Compiled by the Principal of the Hebrew School in Bytom, Germany, S. Tsam
Eye-witness reports by historical orphans

[Note: For various reasons, some of them requested that neither their full names nor the names of their rescuers' villages should be published. I complied with their request.]

Shmulik G., Rozhishche, age 16

Before the massacre of 1942, a rumor spread through our shtetl:

"The Rozhishche Ghetto will not be shot! The deep river called Styr will receive the Ghetto alive."²²

People began to theorize that drowning is one of the most horrible deaths. At that time, against my parents' wishes, I dressed like a Pole and began to roam through fields and forests, having made the decision that, "even if I am found out and shot, it is still better than S-t-y-r."

In some places, I got a job as a shepherd, but after two or three days of grazing the animals, people began whispering to each other, and I had to start my wanderings again, until I reached Kovel.

I became disgusted with this life of wandering – worms were already crawling all over me. I decided to go into the ghetto, and whatever was going to happen to all Jews would happen to me, too. But a Ukrainian stopped me.

"Where are you going?"

"Into the ghetto."

"But you will be shot straightaway!"

"I am a *zhid*,²³ aren't I?"

The Ukrainian explained himself: "In the ghetto, everybody has to be hatless with their hair cut off, and even women and girls must also have shaven heads without a shawl or headscarf. So why are you poking your nose in, when you have long hair and your cap is creased all over."

I didn't understand: "Why aren't they allowed to wear hair?"

The Ukrainian called me to one side.

"Do you know what 'ghetto' means?"

"No."

"Then be quiet. 'Ghetto' means 'death' or, literally, 'sentenced to death,' if not today, then tomorrow, and if they are crafty and keep out of the way on the day of the *Aktion*,²⁴ they will be discovered, because they are hairless" and so on.

At that moment, a group of [slave] laborers was coming back from work – black, miserable – girls and boys alike with shaven heads. It was absolutely dreadful. At the gate, they all held out their dried-up hands and were inspected.

This loneliness horrified me more than the Styr, and I began to make my way back home. Stealing into the ghetto, I came across damaged, looted, orphaned houses. There

was nobody there! I cried bitterly and, that same night, I began to make my way to Lutsk. At the gates of Lutsk, a Polish woman told me that thousands of people would be forced to go to the Krasno Bridge that day, to see what sort of an end the Jewish rebels would have. This was at the end of August 1942, following the two-week Lutsk Ghetto uprising.

On the other side of the gigantic bridge at Krasno, a platform had been built, 15 meters high, from which the rebels would have to jump into the depths of the Styr. The man in charge, Feiertag, filmed the people crammed onto the Styr Bridge, as well as *the naked jumpers*.

Each of them had two escorts, and anyone who resisted was hurled down by them. The execution led me to the decision: "That's the end of me as a Jew. *Farewell to the Jewish people!*"

You will find death wherever you go, so I turned round and went back home to my village, Susk, crawled into a pile of straw and decided, "*To die of starvation is all right; anything rather than fall into the hands of the murderers.*" The next day, I managed to get into a peasant's cottage. Luckily for me, there was nobody at home. I grabbed two loaves of bread and a clove of garlic and fled to the nearby forest. Afraid of people, I climbed up into the branches of a tree, and the two loaves of bread kept me going for 12 days. Instead of water, I ate damp leaves.

I fed myself from the "gardens" until the snow came, and then I was defeated by a new enemy – the cold. A peasant called Pavel dragged me, frozen stiff, out of a pile of barley and asked me,

"Are you Hirschke's boy?"

I tried to lie: "What, me?!"

"Where are your dad's textiles?"

"Buried in the ground."

"Won't they rot?"

"They're guaranteed for 10 years!"

"What do they call you, Liovke?"

"Liove."

"Dear Liove, would you be able to get something out?"

"If the soil thawed a little from the frost, you would certainly not be able to take everything away at one go."

Pavel prepared a hole for me underneath his stove, hoping that, when the soil thawed out, "Liovke" would bring him *that* fortune." Thanks to this delusion, he sheltered me for nearly four months. He survived incidents from the Germans and the Banderists,²⁵ and risked his life on more than one occasion. When it began to get warmer, he began suggesting that we ought to "get going, because digging is already possible" and so on.

Understanding that, once the trip was over, I would have to bid farewell to life, I began putting it off for a week, a fortnight ... One day, Pavel arrived in a fury. "You Gypsy! I've found two freshly dug holes in your room. Whom did you make rich overnight?"

I succeeded in convincing him that there would be enough for him, too. So that nobody should recognize me, he put a new fur coat on me, a good pair of boots and a warm fur cap. In the evening, we hurried off to Rozhishche. He stayed behind in a meadow with his horse, and sent me off to get those goods.

I waited in a stable loft until nighttime and then set out blindly in a different direction, leaving Rozhishche behind me as fast as my legs could carry me. I came to a village

I didn't know. At an isolated hut at the edge of the village I came across a poor Czech, Dupik. In return for the fur coat and the boots, he hid me until the Soviets liberated the territory.

Ch. Perlmutter, Lokatch, age 17

Seeing the black orgy of beating, robbing, raping, and shooting Jews in our shtetl during the first weeks of the occupation, I said goodbye to my colleagues and stopped talking to people.

With boundless spirit, I threw myself into studying the German language. All day and all night, I read, wrote, recited poems, and spoke German to myself. Sometimes, I would present my arguments to a make-believe commandant; at others, I would pretend to be a commandant myself, or a gendarme, etc. I gave my parents, my older sister, and my brother a lot of trouble.

After four months of studying, I left Lokatch with a small suitcase, bidding my parents and the depressed shtetl of my birth an embarrassed goodbye.

At that moment, a German vehicle arrived, and I cheekily raised my right hand and called out,

"Stop!"

The car stopped, and a German shouted, "Who are you?"

"A German girl."

"What do they call you?"

"Charlotte."

"Where are you from?"

"What does it matter? I have to get to Lutsk straightaway!"

One of the Germans gesticulated, and the driver shouted, "Get in." As we were driving along, I told them the tragic story of my parents – they had been killed by bandits. I had escaped by jumping out of a window and, after leaving Germany, had been wandering about in "primitive Ukraine" for eight days, unable to arrange my affairs.

One of the better men among them felt sorry for me and proposed that I should go with him and work for him in his house, looking after two men – and everything. And I settled down with them.

When the cities began bleeding, when Lokatch was liquidated, when my sisters and brothers fought heroically for two weeks, were defeated, and were hurled into the Styra, I used to bewail my fate under the pretext of "a toothache." I worked for them until they fled from the city, and with them ...

[She could no longer speak, and burst into tears.]

Tsila Rab, Lvov, age 12

A big *Aktion* took place in our town on August 1, 1942. The hiding place was so overcrowded that it collapsed, and everyone trying to get out was caught in a corner of the collapsed hiding place. Only my mom, Sonia, and I remained. My mom handed me over to a certain Polish woman, L. Eckstein, and she found herself a job working coal.

For six months I stayed at Eckstein's place posing as a Polish girl until somebody informed on me, and a German and a Ukrainian militiaman came to take me away. On the way to the garrison headquarters, the Ukrainian didn't stay for some reason. I burst out crying hysterically. The German calmed me down. When I stopped crying, he said to me, "Sing a Jewish song!" I sang him the song that was popular at that time: "Did a stone give birth to me? Didn't a mother have me?"

The German let me go. I was afraid to go back to Eckstein, so I spent the day in an outdoor toilet.

When the *Aktionen* started swallowing up specialists and prominent townspeople, my mom also ran away from the bullets to Eckstein. She made a hiding place for us under a pile of straw, giving us a piece of bread and a bottle of coffee every 24 hours. We spent 15 months in the darkness of the hiding place until Lvov was liberated.

The Soviets watched in amazement as the dark faces kissed them and their ammunition. These were lost underground tunnel people, bunker people, people from the sewers, who had risen from the dead. I was among them, with my mom, Sonia.

Sheindel Prier, Potek near Chortkov, age 13

Our shtetl [Potek] numbered more than 3000 Jews. After a year of hard and bitter work, Potek's Jews were forced into the ghetto in Buczacz.

At that time, our family succeeded in escaping to the forest. My dad worked secretly in the village of Skomorokhy. In that forest, we were robbed. We wandered to another forest, where we came across a bunker. There, we made a bunker as well. And in this way, in the ground, the whole summer passed and half the winter. One frosty morning, after tracking us down, Germans and Ukrainians came, shouting, "Out of the bunkers, or we'll throw grenades!"

The first family, Schwartz, was killed immediately. After this, before my eyes, my dad, Yeshaya, my mom, Sassia, and my elder brother, Ben-Zion, were shot. When it came to me, the automatic gun jammed, and I began to run away.

In the meantime, night fell – a frosty, dark night. As I left the forest, I asked myself, "Where do I go?" With a choked cry, I wandered about in the deep snow until I came across a Ukrainian named Ivan Ladanov, from the village of Sokolets. I stood there, half-naked and barefoot, and said to him, "My parents have been shot in the forest. Give me a piece of bread."

The members of the household started crying. Ivan stood up and said, "We must s-a-v-e her!" They gave me something to eat and drink, and made me a bed over the stove. In the morning, Ivan dug a hiding place for me under a rubbish heap, and I spent 13 weeks there in darkness, until his sister from the neighboring village told us, "There are already Soviets where we are."

After she had left, Ladanov harnessed his horses and smuggled me over [to his sister's village] on a sledge, hidden under some straw.

Leibush Gomulko, Rokitno, age 13

Our shtetl numbered more than 6000 Jews. After four people had been seized, Rokitno was saddled with a ransom of 16 kilos of gold. After our Chairman, Z. Slutzki, had brought in the 16 kilos of gold, there was a headcount at the end of August, and we

were suddenly surrounded on all sides by armed Germans and Ukrainian militiamen shouting, "You are being transferred to Sarny."

The heroes of the shtetl – Perlov, Blizhavski, and others – also shouted: "Jews, run away!"

Under the terrible gunfire of the Gestapo, we began to tear ourselves away from the queue. About 2000 people tore into the forest, which was about half a kilometer from the shtetl. After Rokitno had been liquidated, the forest came under fire. The Germans kept coming into the forest from unexpected directions and shooting with mortars. After my dad and sister had been killed in a battle, my mom took me away. We left the forest and entered the Polish village of Aleksandrovka. From there, we had to run away to Mlinok.

After three weeks, we were overtaken by the Ukrainian militia. There were 10 of us. The militia announced, "Anyone who has gold will be released." My mom, Gitel, gave up her jewellery, together with forty-odd five-złoty notes. Then eight people were shot before our eyes. We, on the other hand, were released.

From Mlinok we fled to Netraba, where there was a woman by the name of Jozia Rudnicka. She took pity on us and made us a hiding place. In the meantime, fighting flared up between the Bulbovtsi²⁶ and the Poles. Rudnicka was burned to death and her poor cottage destroyed.

After six days of hunger, we stole out of the burned-out cellar and wandered to the Polish village of Okopy, in a forest called Pakula-Moch. There were another 13 Jewish wanderers there.

We made a bunker in the depths of Pakula-Moch and lay there until Soviet partisans appeared in the forest.

Salia Markus, Berezhany near Tarnopol, age 14

Together with the refugees, our city numbered over 9000 Jews. From one time to the next, the sanctions became harsher. From one time to the next, they demanded bigger contributions. From one time to the next, bigger *Aktionen* and seizures of people raged.

Our family, made up of my parents, Mottel and Nusia, and my sister, Ruzie, threw everything together and, one dark night, after six months in the ghetto, we ran away to a nearby forest called Zolenkovo. There, we met three more families. We made four hiding places, a separate hiding place for each family.

After five weeks of living in the forest, we gave away our possessions for bread during the night.

Four delegates were sent to the ghetto to bring [back] something to barter. I was delegated from our hiding place. When we arrived in the ghetto, we became lost in the great destruction. All the houses were empty, all the doors and windows smashed, a hotchpotch of dishes and feathers. Nobody was there, not a single soul – dead, dead, dead!!

On our way back, a Ukrainian militiaman came driving towards us. He ordered us to halt. When we began to scatter, he opened fire with his machine-gun, shooting two of us. There was a raid. Our hiding place was the last one; that was why we managed to escape into a wild ditch full of brambles.

We lay there as if made of stone, hearing screams and terrible shrieking and, finally, a lot of shooting. At night, we began wandering in the depths of the forest, distancing ourselves from death. After eight days, we returned to the hiding places. Perhaps someone was still alive! Two hiding places were a mixture of flesh and soil; in the third hiding place – that of

the Shechter family – we found all six people shot. Only 17-year-old Zania, seriously wounded, was [still alive and] groaning. We tried to encourage her and save her. On the third day, she whispered, “Be well all of you,” and gave up her young soul. There were no longer any raids. We lay in the hiding place, among the dead, for more than 14 months, until the Red Army gave us back the right to exist.

Yehoshua Weissmann, Radziechów, age 16

Our shtetl numbered 4600 Jews. One harsh decree followed another, and every horror was worse than the one before. Worst of all were the *Aktionen*. At first, gold helped and, later, a good job, and then [being] a highly skilled craftsman. Finally, all philosophies were discarded and it became “*Aktion* above everything else!” And so the Gestapo simply rounded up two or three hundred people and transferred them to Lvov, to a death camp, where tens of thousands of people were infected with typhus or some other terrible disease, which killed them in most cases. Or else, they often took the captives to a spot outside Radechov, stood them there, and gave the order, “Dig graves!” – and be covered over [after you have been shot].

Before the total liquidation, my dad succeeded in transferring the family – my parents, Moshe and Nessia, and my younger sister, Tussia – to the village of Chmielno. The commander of the Ukrainian militia in Radechov, Stepan Haris, took pity on us and dug us a hiding place, with the plea, “If I lose the right [to live], you must save me!”

We lived in the dark in the horrible underground tunnels for 16 months, before we saw the light of day.

Mottele G—r, Zdolbunov, age 12

My brother, Yona, was killed in the first *Aktion*. In the second one, my dad was seized, and the third time, my brother, Chanina, the high school pupil, was also not spared. Only I, my sister, Hinde, and my mom, Chantshek, remained. My mom loved Chanina more than all the other children, for his beauty as well as his wisdom. In the town he had been nicknamed “Chanina the student,” and after he had been torn away from her my mom did not stop crying and lamenting. Her eyes became swollen, and she became blind.

Meanwhile another story unfolded. The Commandant was not satisfied with the way my Hinde had washed his floors, so he stripped her to the waist and told her, “That’s how you have to walk home – without a stitch of clothing!” When she arrived home naked, she smiled for appearance’s sake and said that, luckily for her, hardly anybody had noticed, and so on. At dawn the next morning, we found her lying in bed with her throat cut.

My blind mother went on hunger strike. On the eighth day, her life was also extinguished. A strange idea came to me – revenge. I dreamed of getting hold of a grenade, throwing it into the command post, and – dying. I didn’t find a grenade in the ghetto, so I went off to the villages, [thinking that] perhaps I would find a grenade, or even two, there.

I lost my way and came across the Czech, Kapleifer. After I had eaten my fill, I forgot everything. I no longer wanted to die and I didn’t want to return to the ghetto either. Kapleifer explained to me, “You have to look after the horse, nothing else. And for this you may eat as much as you want to, only you have to have 13 pairs of eyes. If a German or a Ukrainian militiaman steps into my yard, you must leave and don’t look at his face.”

I slept in the stable, and that is how I once heard the gate creak and someone creep inside. I recognized him in the morning. It was Leiserke Morgenthoi, from Hrubieszov.

“Where [have you come] from, Leiserke?” I asked him.

“From the forests.”

“And Zdobunov?”

“Oho, it’s already three weeks since it was wiped out.”

“And who is left?”

“The houses, the orchards, the main road.”

“And the goods?”

“Sent off to Germany.”

I hid him in my hideout and didn’t reveal the secret to Kopleifer [sic]. He lay in the straw for months until he came down with typhus. At that time, I stood in great danger of Kofleifer [sic] discovering the sick, hidden man. Gathering the last of my strength, I saved him. More than once I was abused by the Czech: “You stuffed yourself like a bull there, so why are you carrying bottles of hot milk in your pockets?” An excuse here, an excuse there, Leiserke died.

S. Duranska, Sofyovka, Volynhia, age 14

Horrifying rumors began spreading from all the surrounding cities and little towns – here a pogrom, there a pogrom; here a massacre, there a massacre. All fantasies that Sofyovka would survive faded away. People began to prepare food and water in the concealed hiding places, and when Sofyovka was surrounded, we – I, my elder sister, and my mom – went down into the hiding place. We heard voices, screams, shooting. My mom began reciting “Al Chet.”²⁷

We lay in the hiding place for 13 days but then had to risk stealing out to our kitchen and grabbing a bucket of water and six to eight kilos of peas. We survived for nine days on this diet, and then we had to get on our way.

With heavy hearts we made our way to a familiar Christian woman, Makarenie, who scolded us: “A camp full of Jews still remains, and they are creeping into the villages, searching for death!” This news gave us strength, and we made for the camp straightaway. When they saw us they went as white as milk.

“Are we to lose our heads for the sake of three worms?!”

“What do you mean, lose your heads?”

“There are 483 of us left, and they make a count three times a week. If one person is missing or there is one more, everyone will be shot.”

We were embarrassed and left.

Little by little we became used to the forest. We made a hiding place and lay there. If we had to change a shirt – once every two or three months – we forgot, and, if three or four hungry days went by, it didn’t matter to us either. Little by little, Makarenie began to behave towards us with more respect. She could not send us to the camp any more, because it had long ago been liquidated. And, in this way, the winter gradually passed,

the forest began to become green again, and who knows whether the three of us would have survived to see salvation, when two Germans drove up as we were breaking some thin twigs.

I was the last one and was the first to spot them, which is why I managed to climb up into a thick-branched pine tree. They caught my mom first, and then my sister fell into their hands. A blond German asked my mom,

“Where are the rest of the people?”

“I don’t know.”

“But you were standing with them!”

“I didn’t see anyone else.”

The blond man kicked her in the belly with his boot and ordered her to “Hop to the hiding place and you will stay alive!” My mom began hopping and, as she did so, he shot her with his machine-gun. They took my sister with them.

I sat in the tree for three whole days and nights until I had to be reunited with the earth. The first thing I did was to drag my mom into the hiding place, and then, all alone, I set off to where my eyes led me. Seeing a cow grazing at the foot of a hillock, I crept up close, took off my shoe, filled it with milk, and stilled my hunger.

“Have you gone mad?”

Turning round, I saw Makarenie behind me. I burst out crying and told her about everything. The Christian woman was moved to tears and took me home with her.

Manya Tepper, Tluste near Tarnopol, age 12

Our shtetl numbered close to 6000 Jews, including refugees. Four terrible *Aktionen* took place in our shtetl. Afterwards they set up “tanneries,” where they began processing leather for the Army, thinking that this might perhaps calm the fury. In 1943, when rumors began to spread that the Soviets were already crossing the Dnieper, the Gestapo cancelled all life-saving qualifications – no more work, no more gold, no more profession.

S-o-u-l-s!

Three hundred of the thousands of defenseless people murderously hounded into their graves were selected for a camp. My dad, Einshel, was one of the lucky ones included among the 300 men, so he also dragged me out of the grave. The 300 men worked on the land around the farms at Lisovich, Shchensnovicha, Olshanitsa, and Rozhanivka.

Because of a sudden attack by the Red Army, the Germans had to flee from the shtetl. However, Oberführer [Senior SS Colonel] Patu pulled himself together, and a squadron of some 20 or more aircraft flew in and bombed the camp with murderous effect. Seventy-five percent of the Jews were killed in the last bombing raid.

Efrayim Zeltser, Melnitsa on the Dniester, age 14

Our shtetl numbered 4000 Jews. From week to week, Melnitsa became smaller; from week to week, Melnitsa became poorer; and from week to week, Melnitsa became hungrier.

In 1943, at the beginning of autumn, the shtetl was surrounded by Gestapo people and Ukrainian militiamen, and people were forced into the square. Three Germans ran over to the pile of straw I was lying in [and prodded it] with their bayonets. I was stabbed in two places, but kept quiet. Kellner and Beckmann, two Germans from Chortkov, appeared in the square, shouting, "Expand the *Aktion*!" The Gestapo began filling the quota. I thought to myself, "I am going to die from my wounds anyway," so I went over to the square.

In the meantime, darkness fell. It was a dark night. The Germans positioned machines with lights all round the square, so that nobody would be able to run away. My friend, Zelig Kimmelman, and my brother, Yisroel, began to throw stones, breaking the reflectors, and were immediately shot dead by gunfire. At the same time, people started running. I sensed that this was happening and began running too. Soon afterwards, tens of rockets began to sparkle [in the sky], and all the people who had run away were turned back. In the meantime, trucks [loaded] with weapons arrived, and the Germans gave the order, "Unload the weapons and load yourselves [onto the trucks]!"

I was in the shadow, [hidden from sight] behind a pile of weapons, and the following evening I ran away to the village of Ivania, to the Pole, Novachok, for whom my dad, Yehudah, had worked clandestinely as a harness-maker. Five weeks later, Novachok threw us out. We went off to the forest called Dzhviniochka, where we came into contact with some 70 Jews from the surrounding liquidated cities.

Three months later, the Germans began to leave the territory, and it was precisely as they were retreating that they sensed that there must be Jews in the Dzhviniotchka Forest. A squadron of 18 aircraft began to make the treetops shake, showering the forest with bombs and grenades. On that day, 53 people lost their lives.

Let this not be forgotten!

A. F—g, Derazhnya near Rovno, age 15

A lot of things I cannot repeat. A lot of things I must not tell. A lot of things I am ashamed to tell. Out of almost 3000 Jews, only __ remain. You will not believe me anyway. My dad was killed in the first *Aktion*. Both my brothers, Asher and Zeinvel, were thrown into the River Horyn for trying to smuggle flour into the ghetto. The bread that the Derazhnya Ghetto used to get was colored, harmful, I remember. That the entire ghetto got the bread – I don't remember such a case, because the ghetto regularly never got more than for 70 to 80 percent of the people in the ghetto. And those who grabbed places at the head of the queue used to get it; those at the end – hunger!

Once, I almost lost my life trying to get that disgraceful bread. Angry at the whole world, I went into a toilet and ate all three portions. And I went home protesting, "Why do you send me, the youngest one in such cold?! I can't get it in any case!"

In the middle of the night – a frosty one – my sister, Sareke, went out to grab the first place in the queue. After seven or eight hours of freezing in the snow, came the news: "You won't get any bread today!" Frustrated, Sareke came back. She began hiccupping, and spitting blood. On the sixth day, her young life was extinguished.

One day, my mom came back with a broken arm. Because she had been trying to smuggle in a piece of wood, a Gestapo man had broken her arm with it.

I begged her, "Mama, give me something to eat!"

Not thinking for long, she burst into hysterical tears: "I slaved away for a whole day and have come back a cripple!" Then, she hit her head with her fist three times: "Give me something to eat! Give me something to eat! Give me something to eat!"

After the three blows, I didn't recognise her. Her eyes began to gleam, and a venomous smile appeared on her dried-up face. For two days and nights she lay as if in a dream. On the third day, she "killed off" the entire household: "Where is my husband? Where are my children?" And then she died.

In the meantime, the Sonderführer [Specialist Leader] demanded five kilos of gold.

Nobody took any notice of me, so I decided to go to my brothers, Asher and Zeinvel. Why did I run away from the Horyn? And which village did I run to? And how was I rescued? It is none of your business!

[The child was in tears. She regretted having revealed her sins.]

Salia Feldman, Ostrovtsa near Lutsk, age 17

Our Rabbi, Moishele V., organized the rebels who had escaped from the Lutsk Ghetto, and gave them gold and money to buy weapons, so that they would be prepared for the expected day of judgement. The resistance was successful! Many Germans and Ukrainians died. Out of a total of more than 1600 people, the murderers managed to take 350 older people, but the rest escaped, and that is where the tragedy began – day in, day out, raids, cordons, hunger, cold.

Seeing that our numbers were falling day by day, I ran away to the distant village of Prisapnice. There was an informer in the village. The Banderovtsi carried out a raid. In the evening, they came across tracks in the snow, which led to a pile of straw. When the pile started burning, I and my sister, Bulia, had to come out. Both Banderovtsi murderously ordered us, "On the ground!" We stretched out on the snow, wanting to be rid of the hunger as fast as possible. There was one shot, then a second – and a question: "Nu?"

The one who had fired the shots bent down, had a look, and confirmed, "One is dead, and the other one is dying!" They tore our boots and our coats off us and left in triumph.

In the middle of the night, the village headman, Lakash Martiniuk, who had observed the picture from his window, stole out silently to bury the murder victims, and saw that one of them was still gasping. He took me into his cottage and, after some hours of reinvigoration, I opened my eyes. The bullet had passed through my neck, missing the windpipe and gullet. Lakash knew about medicine and went about helping me to get better.

After three months, I had recovered. Lakash led me into the hiding place and congratulated me: "You have risen from the dead, so you will live, and you will also outlive the bandit Hitler! And you should carry your wound round the big world, so that everyone will see his bestiality. They will see how he incited all and sundry against the eternally innocent people, which gave mankind morals, light, and godliness."

Lakash wept from above, and I wept in the hiding place.

Sarah Shwartzbach, Skala Podolska near Tarnopol, age 16

Our shtetl numbered 2000 Jews. After the first pogrom, there were 900 people left, who were forced to move away to Borshchov. The German Commandant's office allowed

three families to return to Skala by giving them permits. Among them was our family, which numbered 11 people at that time.

After the liquidation, when Borshchov became *judenfrei*, refugees came running to Skala Podolska. When Skala was surrounded by the Gestapo, we just managed to escape into the neighboring forest, leaving behind a sister and two elder brothers. Little by little almost 500 people gathered in the forest. The Germans had anticipated this, and they attacked the forest from all sides.

Altogether, 418 Jews died in that terrible raid. By various miracles, 73 were saved. I and my mom, Rivkah, were the only ones of our big family left.

Returning to life, we became hungry again. My mom took me with her to the village to beg the Ukrainians for a piece of bread. Sinking into the deep snow on the outskirts of the village in that gloomy night, we heard the order: "Halt!" We started running away, and firing started. Thanks to the snow drifts I was unharmed.

We wandered around for months, freezing and hungry, until we heard a good word. My lost brother, David, appeared with the first tank reconnaissance patrol. A tall lieutenant, A. Gochman (from Kiev, himself a prosecutor), got out of the second tank. Handing us bread and jam, he congratulated us in a fatherly manner: "Dear little sister and brother, witnesses from Skala! Be strong! It is for you that our Katyushas [rockets] are flaming, for you that our long-range artillery is thundering, for you that our artillery and mortars are glowing! Be strong! Back to life! Back to values! Back to humanity! ... Back, back, back!

"Go back home to human life! Warmest greetings to you from the father and leader, from the hero of our epoch – Josef Stalin!"

Hersh Vitlin, Zholkov near Lvov, age 17

If anyone tells you that there was such a thing as a good German, don't believe him! Let him go to the graves of the people of Zholkov and see for himself. Only a single sign remains of the 8000 Jews – *judenfrei!*

On November 28, 1942, Zholkov had to move to a certain ghetto. Thinking that pogroms would take place during the evacuation, our family ran away to the Polish farmhouses called "Kolonija," to the Pole Jan Lukovsky, where we lay in a hiding place for five months. The settlement began talking about Jews, and suspicion fell on Lukovsky. A Banderovtsi patrol came to him, but we managed to escape to the forest.

On May 1, two drunken armed Ukrainian militiamen turned up in the forest. Dancing on the hiding place, they shouted, "Out *zhidi!*" As we came out, they ordered us to take off all our clothes, ready to be shot. Seeing how unsteady they were on their feet, my dad, A., threw himself on the smaller of the two and grabbed his machine-gun. There was shooting, and my mom and younger sister, Esther, began to scream. I ran out of the forest in confusion. Coming upon an unknown farmhouse, I hid in a pile of straw and waited to die of hunger.

After three days and nights, the owner of the cottage – a middle-aged Pole – sensed that there was a creature in the straw. He brought me out bread and roasted potatoes, saying that, if I didn't want to be exposed, I should always claim that I was there without the householder's knowledge. He used to pass on to me horrible reports from Jewish wanderers. One dark night six months later, a wanderer came to him begging

for bread. He poured out his bitter heart to him at the same time. I recognized the voice – it was my dad. We went away to the Wienzewo Forest. The forest was a sparse one, a bare one. We began to wander in thicker forests.

Once, we noticed a thin plume of smoke coming from some dense shrubs. We noticed a hiding place there, and how happy we were when we saw my long-lost mother and sister there. We cried rivers of tears for joy.

Nineteen days after we had been reunited, a stern-faced forester appeared across from our hiding place, getting his rifle out to start shooting. We attacked him from all sides. The bandit was defeated.

Meanwhile, we left the hiding place and concealed ourselves in various fields of grain. We lay in a dense field of legumes for four days and nights. Hearing that everything was quiet in the forest, we returned to the hiding place and stayed there until late in the autumn. Then we got to know a great Socialist and Ukrainian called Harbak Danilo. He took us to his stable loft, [and there we stayed] until the liberators of Europe marched in.

Sunik [Sonia] Brenner, Lvov, age 14

Our shtetl numbered 156,000 Jews. Soon after the invasion by the German Army, Jewish blood began to flow in the streets. At dawn every day, there were hundreds of blood-stained Jews lying in the streets in a pool of their own blood. The main roads were awash with innocent Jewish blood. And why not?! To murder a Jewish family, you did not have to be a member of the Gestapo, a major or an *oberleiter* [senior leader].

It was enough for a German soldier to come in and do even more than his heart desired. The German [Army] belt with the inscription “Gott mit uns” [God is with us] was the greatest satisfaction; it gave them the highest authority to rob, rape, shoot, and so on. And whoever did the most was made a chief. When the ghetto was established there were already 34,000 fewer Jews. The ghetto area was big enough for 20,000 Jews to live in, but 122,000 had to squeeze into it. Contributions of gold were demanded for the smallest thing, or there was an *Aktion*, or the Jewish militia were hanged on balconies. Get your pleasure from it!

On a visit, Himmler declared, “Too huge a ghetto!”

A ferocious *Aktion* took place. For three weeks, the Gestapo dragged people from [hiding places in] walls, cellars, attics, bunkers, and the deepest underground tunnels. The pogrom raged for three weeks without a break. The ghetto was deafened by the trucks – out, full; in, empty; three out; six in. Three weeks without respite! In that storm, I lost my father, mother, three elder sisters, and a little brother. On the terrace opposite the Krakow Bazaar, they put up an eight-noose gallows. When you went by, Jewish intellectuals were hanging there, doctors, lawyers, professors. Every day there were fresh ones. At dawn every day, more respectable ones. The nooses did not cool down.

I was a witness when they seized a group of Jewish intellectuals and issued the order, “All 39 steps of the Legianow Wall must be washed clean with your tongues!” In the courtyard, they [the Germans] flung bottles from the high windows, and they [the Jews] had to sweep the glass and the rubbish with their faces for 200 meters. Finally, they were pushed into a gas van. This is only a tiny fraction of the frightful atrocities that took place daily in Lvov.

Jews became “pebbles” in the hands of the Gestapo. They used Jews to practice on for boxing, rape, shooting, and so forth.

I pined for my parents, sisters, and little Boris, and this, together with my disgust at the ghetto nightmare, threw me into dark despair. I disguised myself as a Pole and said goodbye to my starving, despairing sister and brother.

Once, in the middle of the night, stepping out along a back street and looking for a hole where I could lay my head until dawn, I suddenly heard a strangled whisper from under the earth. There were three Jewish girls in the sewers. They were afraid that I might give them away, so they dragged me in to join them. I crawled down into the deep sewers, knowing that I had been saved – for the time being.

Rachel Koch, Horodenka near Kolomeya, age 13

Our shtetl numbered 7300 Jews. An *Aktion* took place there, then a second, then a third, wiping out more than half our population. On November 22, posters appeared [declaring]: “Horodenka must be *judenfrei* within 24 hours. All Jews must make their way to the ghetto in Kolomey.” Our family, consisting of my parents, Fishel and Malka, and my little brother, Hershel, ran away to the Ukrainian, Semyon Boturo. After eight days, Boturo threw us out. That night, we crossed the Dniester and arrived in Potok just when the massacre was taking place there.

My dad was captured at the same time as we managed to clamber up into an attic. One dark night, we freed ourselves from the terrible destruction and arrived in Buczacz. There we went through four *Aktionen*. In the fifth one, they forced the last refugees to the [mass] graves. We were in a deep hiding place, which was not discovered. We survived for eight days on water alone, and then hunger drove us out. We wandered night after night until we reached the shtetl of Kopychyntsi. However, it was not long before we woke up one morning to find ourselves surrounded on all sides. There, we went down into a prepared bunker where 33 people were hiding.

Because we had not dug the bunker, we were driven into a corner at the back, where we almost suffocated. The next day, the Gestapo discovered our bunker and, after firing into it, they heard screaming. Since they could not find the entrance to the bunker, which was in a cupboard, they kept on firing until the screams had been silenced completely. That day, 28 people were shot dead in the bunker.

Since we were at the very back, I and my brother survived. My mom was only slightly wounded. Forcing our way out of the bunker of death, we began wandering despairingly through fields and forests. We were afraid to go into villages but, on the other hand, cities no longer existed.

Once, when we were lying starving under a silent rock, a Pole walked by – Michael Fedorovich, from the village of Huvisla – and asked,

“Why are you lying here?”

“Where should we lie, then?”

“You’ll get shot!”

“Let death come already!”

He clambered down to us and told us, “The Germans took my three children away for forced labor; Ukrainians handed them over. In protest at this, it would be right to take in three other children.”

My mom understood him and said, "If you do that you will surpass our master Moses, and by reason of this merit, your children will also return!"

That night, he took us in.

Dora Reibel, Korolivka near Tarnopol, age 12

Our shtetl numbered 1300 Jews. On December 28, 1941, an *Aktion* took place in which 1133 Jews died. Gradually, almost 200 people began to emerge from their hiding places and go back to work. On February 5, posters appeared, declaring, "Korolivka must become *judenfrei!*"

Naked and barefoot, we were forced out to Borshchov, where we were for more than a year. The third *Aktion* took place in Borshchov on March 13. I was lying in a stable loft and heard how my father, Ya'akov Reibel, was discovered in his hiding place. When night fell, I clambered down from the stable loft, left everything behind, and ran away to a neighboring forest. After five days of wandering, I came upon a group of 37 people under a rock, from which an underground tunnel stretched, and they were discussing how to get down to it. One of the group tied together rope and towels, and told his little boy to "climb down and tell what you see."

In front of the den was a marsh, and the mouth of the underground tunnel was at the side. After the rope had been let down, it could be seen that the tunnel was 20 meters deep. The child climbed back up and exclaimed excitedly, "A narrow passage, but it widens out at the end into a cavern that can hold 100 people!" One by one we lowered ourselves into the dark tunnel. I was the last one. We had to go down a good 20 meters before a huge cavern was revealed. Someone lit a lamp, and everybody chose a place for himself. After all the wandering and being exhausted by the snow, we all fell asleep.

The heroes of the tunnel came to an understanding with a Pole, Munke Bilinski, who used to lower food and water down to us every three or four days. The 38 of us lived in the tunnel. It was worse than the ghetto, but morale was high, because we knew why we were hungry in the tunnel.

Almost 11 months passed, and not a single bird in the forest could imagine that people were living in the crevasse between two rocks.

Finally, our provider, Bilinski, began to throw down notes telling us that large-scale raids were taking place in all the forests, and that he was very afraid that the tracks might "give you away." He said that he felt that "it would be a pity for you to die, perhaps, after nearly a year in the tunnel, so I thought of sending you down reserve supplies for several days in case I can't approach you, so that you can come through the crisis for another week or two. The snow won't be a problem for ever. In general, be sparing with the food."

For two weeks, we saved bread and a little rye, enough for five days. In addition, Bilinski had specially saved food for us for almost two weeks and never appeared again. Our despair and bitterness made us suspect that Bilinski had got fed up with us, had said goodbye, and – *basta!*

We had to make the acquaintance of his brother-in-law, Bogdan. We waited one more day, two more days, and when Bilinski still had not come we could definitely see that he had become disillusioned. So, three men let themselves up into the outside world, not knowing first of all that it was the middle of the day and, secondly, that armed militiamen were lying in wait among the rocks.

They cold-bloodedly watched the three creeping out of the tunnel, and then shouted, "Halt!" There was also gunfire, but they did not arrest anyone. The three men were quickly drowned in the abyss. The militiamen asked [us to come out], then warned us and [finally] threatened that they would blow up the hiding place immediately with grenades. But nobody went out and there was no reply either.

At that moment, Bilinski was sanctified by the group. We convinced ourselves that we were nothing and knew nothing. We knew only one thing: if we did not go out, there would certainly be grenades, so we pushed a sack full of straw halfway up, so that the grenades would at least not explode in our faces. The next day, a camp of Germans and Ukrainian militiamen arrived. They fired at the outer marsh as if the greatest treasure in the world were to be found there.

The Germans left no stone unturned and ordered that a watch should be kept on the march for a further three or four days. And when the four days produced no results, the final discussion took place. A militiaman who was sent down [to investigate] came out as white as chalk, [exclaiming,] "The hiding place stretches for kilometers!" His statement raised some doubt [in the minds of the Germans and Ukrainians]. Based on what he had said first, the Germans threw down one heavy grenade, then a second, and then a third. The rock collapsed, and the tunnel was blocked.

Two weeks later, the territory was liberated. Standing by the marsh with tear-filled eyes, Munke Bilinski explained to the Soviet officers, "Here 40 unfortunate victims lived for more than a year!" A broad-shouldered major photographed the shattered rock. Meanwhile, we lay [in the tunnel] and waited, not knowing ourselves what we were waiting for. We languished for three weeks. The food had long since run out, and our insides were burning. There had not been even a drop of water for a long time. Our patience gave out: "How long are we going to lie here with the exit blocked? How long are we going to torture ourselves? We have to give ourselves up to them!"

From a corner, someone called out hoarsely, "If there were enough air here, we would not do anything, we could lie here for another eight days, and that would be it. There is a lack of air here, and because of that airlessness we can rot here for weeks, until we die of starvation. Out! We must get out! Out! Out!" And we threw ourselves into our work like hungry wolves attacking their prey.

Calculating that the surface was lower there, we began digging from the other side. Three days and nights we worked before we saw the light of day.

L. V., Stepen [Stefkowa], Podlese, age 16

Disregarding the fact that I am now a good-for-nothing, I was able to save myself at the age of 13 only because of my beauty. In the course of the frequent *Aktionen*, I lost my noble father, sister, and brother. I went to the last massacre with my mom, S.

As I stood naked in front of the graves, a militiaman whom I knew, S. P—n, brought me a coat, asking me with great secrecy, "Will you be mine?" [and adding,] "If so, I'll save you!" I didn't say a word in reply, but immediately started running away, naked. Pushing his way into dense undergrowth, P—n fired two shots and angrily took himself back to the graves. Late at night, the grass began to rustle. Someone approached, calling out,

"L!"

"Are you P—n?"

"Come out!" And we went away.

He hid me for 13 months. I cried non-stop, justifying him to myself [and saying] that he had not shot a single Jew, only the Gestapo had shot them; and that he was not in the least guilty of the extermination of the town of Stepen; the Germans, the Germans, the Germans alone, were guilty!

Once, he came in during the middle of the night, very angry, got hold of his rifle and some grenades, and a small bag of bread and some pork, and ran over to me to say goodbye.

"Be well!"

"Where are you off to?"

"There are Soviet partisans from Medvedev's detachment in the forest. We must take revenge for [the shedding of] innocent blood!"

"You have no right to leave me behind. My heart aches more than yours! I also want to go to the partisans!"

"Come on then, let's take revenge for your sisters and brothers, for Stepen!"

And off we went to the partisans.

It was a still, starless night when 12 men set out on an assignment and only five came back. From then on, I never saw P—n again.

Lusia Priefer, Horodenka, near Kolomey, age 12

In the first *Aktion*, 2640 Jews were killed, among them my sister, Klara Priefer. My brother Boris was killed in the second *Aktion*. The third *Aktion* saw nearly 4000 Jews killed, including my dad, Yisroel.

I ran away into the forest with my mom. After two weeks of wandering through bushes, we crossed the Dniester, going in the direction of Tluste (Tovste). At that time, there was a pogrom going on in Tluste, too. We ran away to the camp in Lisovichi, where there were 500 people. We worked in the fields.

After we had been working for four months, an *Aktion* took place in Lisovichi. We managed to escape and returned to Tluste, where about 300 people were working in the fields on the surrounding farms. After a sudden offensive, the Soviets invaded from both flanks, and the Germans had to retreat, abandoning the camp and its 300 Jews. The Oberleiter even promised that the Germans would be back the next day [and urged us] to work faithfully. The Gestapo fulfilled its task, however. A squadron of some 20 Messerschmitts enthusiastically attacked the camp, and the buildings, with the people inside them, became mixed in with the soil. Only 68 people – those who had not yet returned from working in the fields – remained.

Let this not be forgotten!

Buzha Weiner, Rokitno, age 9

As you know, our shtetl numbered 6000 Jews, and perhaps even more. They called us out to kill us. At the same time, others began to flee to the forest. So, if my dad runs

away and my mom runs away, should I stay with the Germans? So I ran, too. I was already six years old at the time, and my sister, Shulamit, who was not yet four years old, ran after me.

Meanwhile, the Germans fired on the forest. I lost my parents – and until today both of us began to wander through the villages of Aleksandrovka, Netreba, etc. Nobody begrudged us bread, but nobody let us stay overnight, so we learned to spend the night in a field or in an orchard, and sometimes we used to steal into a cowshed.

Shulamit used to say then, “Buzha, do you see what a faithful mother the calf has? Look how she licks its ears. I wish I had been a little calf!” And when she saw the cat on a bed of boards over a stove, she used to say, “I wish I had been a cat!” Then she would start looking at her little finger and smiling at it. But I don’t want to tell anyone about that.

Gershon Mandelkern, Melinov, age 11

Our shtetl numbered 1400 people. Everybody had to work hard for the Germans. When they started to dig graves for us, our family ran away to the Ozhenetsko Forest. After eight days of wandering around in the forest, my mom and elder sister tried to go home, to fetch “things” to exchange for bread. At that very moment, the massacre took place, and they were shot.

A Pole called Bogdan Izhenitz took us into his stable. For two weeks we lay in the straw, until the Ukrainians got wind of it. We managed to escape to the Smorodov Forest before the raid. We found another 150 Jews there from Dubno, Kremenets, and Radzivillov. We got food from the Czechs in the village of Novine.

We had been in the forest for three months when the Germans and Ukrainian militia found out about us. A horrendous raid from all four sides took place in the Smorodov Forest. Out of 152 people, only 13 Jews barely survived. We made our way back to the Ozhenetsko Forest, and there, too, the Gestapo reached us. Three months before the liberation, the Czech, Vene Misteir, from the village of Koline, took us into his hiding place.

Miriam Wechsler, Ludvipol near Ostrog, age 14

Our shtetl numbered 3000 Jews. On September 1, 1941, the first and last *Aktion* took place there. The Gestapo had set itself the task of making Ludvipol *judenfrei*. Of our family, I and my mom, Chana, survived the pogrom. On the third day, hearing that the Gestapo and Ukrainian militia were no longer roaming over the attics, cellars, dens, barns, stables, and so on, we decided to flee from the fire. And, late at night, we ran away to the village of Metshilanka, where we hid ourselves for eight months.

Information reached the village of Metshilanka that there was going to be a raid, so we ran away into the forest. After three weeks, we went back to Metshilanka. The second *Aktion* took place, and we ran away to the forest again. After six weeks in the forest, we came to the village of Levotches. There we met another five Jews. We wandered there until Soviet-Jewish partisans from Medvedev’s detachment appeared.

Rita Frenkel, Skala Podolska, age 10

Seeing how the Gestapo “tolerated” Jews, we prepared a concealed bunker during the nights. The concealed bunker saved us several times from arrests and direct *Aktionen*, until we had to leave it because, after the last massacre, the sign “Skala [is] *judenfrei*” was already fluttering.

Not being able to watch the cruelties of the Germans, which they carried out against thousands of innocent people – men, women, and children – the oldest nun hid us in the loft of the church. There were five of us: I; my mom, Frieda; and my sister, Miriam; the dentist, Schwartzbach; and his sister.

The priest, the sexton, did not know about us – nobody did, apart from the oldest nun, Maria K. [Then] Ukrainian detectives began watching the Polish woman and noticed that she went to the church more often than everybody else.

Meanwhile, we stayed happily in the high loft, with the bells ringing above us, for nine weeks until, one day, the church was surrounded on all sides. Germans and Ukrainian militiamen searched and dug into all the hiding places – holes and cellars – and when they saw that there was nobody there they were embarrassed and went away. But two of the militiamen wanted to look in the loft in particular. Tearing open a hole in the roof, they found five people in a corner. Dentist Schwartzbach had a long discussion with them, after which we managed to buy our freedom with gold, on condition that we leave “the church during the night.” We climbed down from the church and stood there, depressed and wondering, “Where do we go? Where?”

We decided that what would be would be, and climbed up into the attic of our own house. But we could not stay there for long, so we went off into the forest. I was begging a Pole, Adam S., for some bread, when he brought my dad, Julius Frenkel, out of a hiding place.

The joy lasted for more than half a year. We were in the forest for eight months, in a narrow hiding place. Afterwards, there was a raid. My dad went out to conceal the entrance well, and so on. He tried to climb up a many-branched pine tree by himself. Thanks to the camouflage, we were not discovered, but my dad never came back.

On January 1, 1943, a Ukrainian militiaman came into the forest to cut down a pine. Catching sight of me and my mom from a distance, carrying thin twigs, he thought that armed partisans had lost their way, and quickly ran away from the forest. When we had pulled ourselves together, we were sure that he had run off to fetch some Germans!

We were already afraid to go into the hiding place again. For three days and nights we trudged through the snow. Then, we went back to the hiding place and stayed there until the first Soviet patrol arrived.

Luba Suchovich, Berezov near Stolyn, age 14

On June 22, 1942, on the orders of the district commissar of the area, the shtetl was forced to the prepared graves. My little brother, Yitzchak, and I went inside a chimney and, at night, we stole out of Berezov to the village of Brishch. One still night, after two weeks of wandering around the grain fields under the open sky, we saw our mother, Ettel, in the moonlight, coming out from among the stalks. She went almost mad with joy. Meanwhile, she asked us

if we had any bread. We had some boiled potatoes, enough for two days. She gobbled them up. (She seemed to have had nothing to eat for three or four days and nights.)

She took us to a Christian woman, Varka Ragulchik, telling her with great pathos how we had been resurrected from the dead. She pleaded with her like that for six hours, until she convinced her. Varka, I, and my mom dug a hiding place in the cellar. We lay there for six months, until the Gestapo began “showing new wonders” – burning down Ukrainian villages. And if villages were being burned down Brishch would be one of the first. Our Varka was among those whose homes were burned down.

After they had burned her grain and what little [else] she had, she became apathetic, and we were the victims. The good Varka sent us away from the hiding place to the Samara Woods. After three weeks, she changed her mind, came out to the Samara woods, and took us back to the hiding place. By that time, the cellar had become her home. She had knocked together a little table and a bench, and she had put a chest in front of our hole.

Varka Ragulchik used to go off to a neighboring village every Sunday to get something and live in the ground in that way, and we lived underground. At night, my mom used to call out from behind the chest:

“Varka!”

“I’m here.”

“And that’s how it will be. The saintly Joseph also lay in a pit. Have you heard of the saintly Joseph?”

“No.”

“Ha, ha, ha. Who hasn’t heard of Joseph the Gypsy?! I mean the Emperor of the Gypsies. Who dreamed dreams like Joseph? Who has as many brothers as Joseph had? That alone is the best sign that you, Varka, will have much good, because you saved an entire city. If no more than three orphans from Berezov are left, that means that you have saved the whole of Berezov. You probably think that the Jews are done for. No, little sister, there are still millionaires in Paris, and Jewish millionaires in America – will they remain silent? All Brishch will envy you. Because of your good heart, because of all your sufferings, for all your fears you will still have much pleasure. Patience, that’s the main thing!”

[Note: Even today, the Suchovich family still prays for material support (from the Jews, because they save Jews)].

Rachel Gelman, Rovno, age 11

Our city numbered more than 30,000 Jews. The first pogrom took place on July 14, 1941. Almost 3000 Jews were killed. The second pogrom took place after a visit by Reichsminister Alfred Rosenberg on November 4. He conferred about Rovno and ruled, “Too many Jews!”

On November 5, posters appeared [declaring]: “Tomorrow, November 6, all Rovno Jews will be transferred to Korets. They must all present themselves at the square at 8 o’clock in the morning. Anyone who tries any tricks will be discovered and shot!” Seventeen thousand victims died.

For three days and nights, the Gestapo continued to drag Jews from all their hiding places. Our hiding place was well concealed and was not discovered. Later on, Jews began to settle in Rovno again, but we could not feel at ease in such an inferno, and went away to Oshch. We stayed there until the slaughter. When Oshch became *judenrein*, we ran away to the village of Krasnoselye. We found a wild ditch there under a rock, and settled into it.

Begging for bread, I found favor with a certain Zacharke, who took pity on me and took me into her home. To the neighbors I passed myself off as a Ukrainian girl. I stayed with Zacharke for six weeks, until Ukrainian villages began to burn and, every day, Krasnoselye began to assume that the Germans would come and burn [everything]. Then Zacharke turned me out. I did not find my parents in the ditch among the rocks.

I began wandering on my own through the villages of Bochanytsya and Vitkov and others. I missed my parents terribly, so I went back to Krasnoselye, begging for bread during the night and sitting all day in the ditch bewailing my bitter fate.

One rainy autumn night, wet to the bone, I fell fainting into the cottage of a Ukrainian, Yakub Gaminiuk, with a choked cry: "Give me a piece of bread!"

Handing me a piece of bread, he asked me pleasantly,

"And where are you going now?"

"To the ditch!"

"How old are you?"

"Eleven."

"Eleven! A child! Alone in a ditch on a night like this!? Just wait a minute. There are Jews in a certain place; if they allow it, I'll take you to them."

Fifteen minutes later, he came back amazed.

"When did you leave Oshch?"

"I was with a person for six weeks."

"And before that?"

"This is the ninth week that I have been wandering about on my own."

"Come on then!" Yakub shouted, and led me into the stable.

He removed the straw from behind the trough, took away a cover, and let me down into the hiding place. I saw my dad (Lipman), my mom (Freide), and my little brother (Yitzchak). We lay in the hiding place like that, underneath the horses, for 14 months, until the Banderovtsi became more rampant. A German came to Krasnoselye for an assignment, and was shot from a window. The village understood that the attempted assassination would not be ignored, so they ran away from the village. Before Yakub ran away, he sent us away. We began to wander about Oshch and, from there, to Korshev. In that village we got to know an elderly peasant, Lekion Zinkevich. He lived on an out-of-the-way farm and had his own piece of forest. We dug a hiding place there, where we stayed until the German bandits left the territory.

Sima Gellerand, Dubno, age 14

Our town counted more than 9000 Jews. In the first *Aktion*, 1260 Jews were killed. On March 12, 1942, the sorrow-laden ghetto was created in 15 minutes. People were shot for bringing very large parcels with them, and those who brought smaller parcels with them were beaten to death. All we were allowed to take was the yellow patch.

On May 27, the second *Aktion* took place; 3630 people were shot. Later on, there were frequent kidnappings of people. The hunger was frightful; every day, dozens of people died of starvation. At the end of September 1942, Dubno, with its great history, became *judenrein*. Our family was one of the luckiest ones, who managed to make their getaway from the dreadful pogrom, which went on endlessly for four days and nights. We went away along the banks of the River Ikva to the village of Lubomirka. The Ukrainians drove us out, and we had to become forest people.

On December 22, there was a raid. My elder sister, Rena, was shot. The second raid took place on March 3, 1943. My mom, who was lying in the bushes, was shot, and a bullet wounded me. We ran away from the forest to a Czech settlement called Dlugopole, and when the Banderovtsi began poking their noses into the settlement, we went into a hiding place [in the cottage of] the unforgettable Czech, Emil Nedbalec.

Minna Grinzeid, Podkamen near Brody, age 14

Where we lived, the first *Aktion* took place at the beginning of August; the second, at the end of September; and the third, in December 1941, when everyone was forced to leave and go to Brody. There was only one little sign to be seen of a shtetl of Jews where not one remained – “*judenfrei*.”

We devoted whole nights to digging a hiding place – a deep one, a large one – to preparing everything possible – first and foremost, a barrel of water. And when the hour struck for the massacre in Brody, we were very frightened. We lay in the hiding place for 32 days. We still had a little bread and a little grain for three weeks. The days after that were hungry days, with nothing but water, so that we had to take our wandering-staff into our hands and begin to set out. We went back to Podkamen, from where we barely escaped with our lives, and we went to the forest. There we found tens of hiding places and counted 376 people. We called the ravine “Europe,” because there were Jews there from the whole world – Lvov, Orechov, Brody, Radzivillov, Dubno, Lutsk, and even people from Lublin and Warsaw. (That is to say, refugees).

We lived in “Europe” for five months, until a patrol of Banderovtsi came down to us in a hurry and proposed that we join their ranks. An agreement was made on January 1, 1943. Three hundred and seventy-six people left “Europe” and settled in Krutniv, where the Banderovtsi handed out work according to each one’s speciality, because there were tailors, shoemakers, harness-makers among us. I and a group of girls made sweaters for the Banderovtsi. Others sewed shirts from Ukrainian imitation linen.

Three months passed, until the staff began transferring groups “to other villages.” (Regularly, groups of 20 to 30 people were taken out to “Europe” and shot there.) Thus, we began to be fewer and fewer day by day.

When the last group left, we numbered 34 people. Our hands could no longer work, and our eyes never dried because of our weeping. In the plates and on the spoons, on the

machines and on the needles, flickered the figures: from 376 to 34. Only 34 out of 376 Jews remained, and these were not just Jews; they were cities! Every single one represented a city or town. One more march, and everything would be finished. Still such frightening pain, at the time when the red flag was already flying in Rovno! At the time when Rovno was greeting all citizens with the slogan, "Long live the brotherhood of all peoples!"

There were already battles in Dubno. We must not surrender to the avid Hitlerite followers. We must get away ... Let us force our way to the front!!

And we ran away.

Ch. Kurland, Kolk, age 17

When prisoners of war had already begun digging graves, my dad said, "First of all we must run away!" and we went off to the forest. Seeing us, another three families ran away to the forest.

There, we dug up boxes of grenades that had lain hidden since the Soviet retreat. And we began studying how we should proceed and when we should throw them. Twelve days after we had escaped, the massacre took place in Kolk. The Banderovtzi informed the Germans that there were Jews in such and such a crevice, and the Germans and the Ukrainian militia invaded the forest as if for a dance, aiming their rifles and machine-guns at the unprotected and starving souls. When the forest began rustling, my dad ordered, "Freeze!" At that moment, we all froze. Unhindered, the Germans came nearer, and when they were within 30 meters of us, there was a shout: "Fire!" Grenades began flying one after the other. The Germans were repelled, leaving five casualties behind. The first one fell on our side – and the first one to fall was my father. On the third day, they fired mortars at the ravine but [by that time] we were already six kilometers away.

In the snow, our situation worsened in every respect. If you dug a hiding place, it filled with water overnight (the forest was on a wet, low-lying plain). It was hard to feel friendly towards snow, and it was even worse with provisions, because there were eyes watching the forest, and tracks were the biggest giveaway. Once, I went with two companions to beg for bread, and we were shot at and chased for five kilometers, until we lost each other. Entering the forest from the north, I lost my way and could not get to my companions. I could not find my way for three whole days and nights; I ran about lost, and then I saw a treeless horizon. In the evening, I went off in that direction.

And, dropping into the first cottage, I asked,

"How far is it to Kolk from this village?"

"What?"

"Kolk"

"Kvolsk?"

"No, Kolk, Kolki!"

"Ha, ha, Kolki, by the ... Ha, ha, Kolki – eighty-odd kilometers!"

A chill went through all my limbs, and I knew I would never see my companions again. My head began to spin, and I felt that I would fall over then and there, like a felled tree.

The elderly Pole noticed that I was lost and questioned me. I told him everything from beginning to end. He calmed me down and then, pointing to the bed of boards above the stove, he said, "You will lie here until the *tovarishchi*²⁸ return. They must return."

And when Soviet partisans appeared, I led them in that direction, achieving what is confirmed in these character reports.

[*Note: I have seen his character reports from Federovsky, the commander of a partisan detachment. They say that Ch. Kurland had three enemy convoys and 93 dead Germans to his credit. S. Ts.*]

Esther Katz, Ignatovka, Volhynia, age 11

Our shtetl numbered 5800 Jews, including new arrivals. We had tanneries, tar factories, small soap factories, and comb factories and, since it was far from the main road, no Germans came. That is why Jews streamed into our shtetl from Rovno, Lutsk, Kivertsi, and so on. Thus, no *Aktionen* took place in our shtetl. We only heard rumors about how all the surrounding towns were burning.

Then, on July 27, 1942, Ignatovka was surrounded on all sides by 300 Gestapo people and Ukrainian militiamen. When the ferocious *Aktion* began, my parents and I went into the dense fields of rye five meters away behind the house. Lying in the grain, we heard Jews shouting from the trucks: "If anyone survives, take revenge!" We lay among the grain for three days, and then we went into the forest. We didn't meet anyone there. We made a hiding place and, at night, we used to go and steal things from the houses. We fed ourselves from the gardens, and we prepared potatoes for the whole winter.

Ten months went by without any contact with humanity. We were able to eat potatoes once every 24 hours and to sleep. At that time, I would have given half my life for 10 grams of salt. Seeing my exhaustion, my mom spoke up and said. "I am going to try and make my way over to the nearby settlement of Zhurovich to hear what the world is saying and, at the same time, perhaps I'll beg for a piece of bread for the child and a little salt. I'm sick of unsalted potatoes!" My dad begged her not to go, but she went just the same.

It was a still May night. I thought my mom would return at any moment with a piece of bread, a little salt. "Bring me a gram of salt, rather than a ton of honey!" I had told her. Dawn slowly began to break. We waited a second night, a third night, and when she did not come on the fifth night either, we became extremely despondent, tired of the forest, the hiding place, and life itself. We decided to wander off. Where to? We didn't know ourselves.

We began to eat our fill of potatoes and continued for three days and nights, because we were leaving them behind in any case. My dad took me on his shoulders, and we said goodbye to our hiding place. We went over to the forest. We could not dig a hiding place there, because water trickled in. The next night, we went to the Polish village of Przebrodzie. There we got bread, onions, and a little salt. We used to go to Przebrodzie and beg once every eight to ten days, and then go back to the forest. We suffered greatly because of the rains. I very much missed that hiding place and my mom.

In the meantime, the battle between the Banderovtsi and the Poles flared up. The Banderovtsi began to burn down Polish villages and settlements. Przebrodzie was heavily armed and resisted. They used to lie in ambush during the night, so that we no longer

dared to visit Przebrodzie at night, because we could easily have run into a Banderovtsi patrol. The Polish patrol would also not have left us alone. During these nights, we found a burned-out village. We began to feed ourselves from the gardens there. We waited for the potatoes to ripen, so that we could prepare them for winter.

In this way, we again took our leave of humanity. We began digging up potatoes to prepare them for the winter. We prepared them and covered them with a lot of leaves, so that they should not become frozen in winter. Knowing that there were only bogs and marshes there, we made a fire, which burned for months, because we were sure that nobody would come there. We roasted potatoes over that fire and warmed ourselves at it. The fire was never put out.

Once, we heard rustling and saw people with axes. Thinking that they were coming after us, we began to run away. They began calling after us. My dad heard their voices and recognized that they were familiar Poles, so we turned round and went back. The Poles were astounded.

“Why are you still staying in the forest?” they asked.
 “Because we are not allowed into the village.”

The Poles opened their mouths, saying, “The Soviets have already been in Lutsk for three months!” I began to cry when my dad began kissing the acquaintances who had given him the good news.

S. Vatinger, Kremenets, age 14

When the persecution of Jews flared up, and we had already begun to feel the edge of the cruel sunset, my dad reached an agreement with the Christian, Romanko. After a secret transfer of funds, he prepared a hiding place in a bushy depression in the ground, with all the necessary comforts.

One rainy night, Romanko led us out to the forest. Our family at that time already consisted of only three people: my dad, my elder sister, Sabina, and myself. In front of the hiding place, Romanko pointed out to us that “there, to the left, is a spring. If you want it, very good water. And from there, a path leads directly to the hamlet.” When we went down into the hiding place, our eyes lit up, because we felt that we were beyond the control of the murderers. We found there two bags of rusks (dried-out bread), a barrel of cabbage, a primus stove, five liters of oil and several kilos of pork. Under the ghetto system, this would have been enough food for more than a year! We avoided all contacts. We did not even want Uncle G. to know about us – we said goodbye to humanity.

Some weeks later, in the evening, [we heard] twigs breaking and a rustling noise in the distance, which was coming closer. We went as white as chalk. Our hearts began to thump. They had come to kill us! The steps came nearer and nearer. My dad got ready the “gold jacket,” which had almost 400 five-złoty notes sewn into it. Perhaps we would be able to ransom ourselves.

The walker drew slowly nearer, whispering to himself and, taking off the cover, called out, “Mr. Vatinger?!” We recognized Romanko’s voice and ran towards the little door. The wonderful Christian lamented, “Goodbye Kremenets! Everybody – young and old, women

and children, shoemakers and doctors, tailors and dentists – all dead; bestially, tragically, horribly! Goodbye Kremenets! Unable to watch our weeping, he handed down another bag of rusks and silently went down to the spring.

In this way, a week went by, a month, two months. Winter passed, and the forest began to grow green again, to blossom, and our wounded souls became more cheerful. In the spring of 1943, round about May and June, our provisions ran out. My dad went to see his acquaintance, Franko, late one night. The latter explained to him, “Late at night is out of the question, because the neighbors, hearing the dogs bark, will sniff out with whom the wanderer is in contact. And in any case it is preferable that the youngest child should go. Whatever happens, she is still a child. Who knows her? Who knows about her?” The first time, I was very afraid to go on my own, but I gradually got used to it. And, not wanting him to become fed up, we used to take out a five-złoty note from my jacket for every trip and give it to him for the bread. It was a dewy night, a night of longing, when I went down to the spring.

While I was at Romanko’s place, there was a commotion – three vehicles full of Banderovtsi drove up, demanding flour, barley, pork. Romanko pushed me into a haystack, saying, “You’ll have to stay the night.” That day, I lay there like a piece of wood. In the evening, Romanko came up to me, poured out his heart to me, gave me two loaves of bread, and accompanied me out.

In front of the hiding place, I stood rooted to the spot with fright. There seemed to be two people standing there and not moving. I wanted to back away, but it was too late. As I approached them, my blood curdled. “Papa! Sabina! No, it’s a dream, a fantasy! Let’s just make a fire! Let’s just go in.” I jumped down into the chaotic hiding place, made a fire, cut myself some bread, jumped out of the hiding place, jumped back down, and instantly jumped out again. All my suspicion fell on Romanko. He ought to be cursed in front of his neighbors. Revenge!

I ran chaotically to the “murderer.” My knocking gave Romanko a fright and he charged downstairs.

“What’s the matter?”

“My dad needs you at once!”

He grabbed a *samarkane*,²⁹ and we set out in silence. When we reached the hiding place, Romanko stood stock still and touched the congealed [corpses]. Yes, they were hanging!! Giving a choked cry, he said, “May the hand of whoever has done this be cursed, and his people, for ever!” Then he cut the rope, carried them into the hiding place, and covered the little door.

He took me home with him. My place was behind the cupboard, and when he asked me whether I had anything, I lied because, in the ghetto, people often used to tell each other that [non-Jews] used to take the gold and then throw them out. Once, in the middle of the night, Paraska, thinking that I was asleep, attacked her husband: “What do you want from my life?! Such bitter burdens! Four meters [sic] of grain from every hectare, potatoes, meat, taxes! On top of that, we have to have this troublesome person! They are burning villages out there, settlements are going up in flames! What good is she to you?!”

Romanko became angry: “What good is she to you?!” You know that Kremenets numbered hundreds of Jewish families. The big forest has been cut down, and only one little twig remains. She represents a city of many thousands! You must have respect for the historical orphan! Shut up!” At dawn, I called Romanko and gave him the gold jacket. He cut it open and took out more than 300 five-złoty notes.

Paraska’s intrigues had been extinguished.

D. G—n, Ludmir, age 16

The 300 inmates of the Ludmir [labor] camp used to turn out more work than thousands of Germans could have done. That is why the camp was one of the last in the Ukraine. Down below, in the dark bunkers, 150 Jews with no rights at all slaved away. I, a total orphan, was one of the bunker people.

The slaughter was already going on near Lutsk when we heard the evil news: “Comrades, we are being surrounded!” Knowing that once the camp had been liquidated, we would be lost in any case, I went out into the open air and, seeing that one flank was still free, a whole group began to run away. I was the first one. And the Germans immediately opened fire with machine-guns. I fell, ran, and fell again, until I managed to make my getaway from the crowd and disappeared between the peasants’ barns.

Nobody wanted to let me in and nobody wanted to give me a little piece of bread either. They used to demand, “Give me money, *zhid!*” so I began stealing to feed myself. During that time, I taught myself to eat raw chickens, beetroots, etc. I did not spend my nights in the same places that I spent my days. My [hiding] places were in haystacks, straw, broken boards, piles of rubbish – and if I heard nasty remarks about the martyrs, I used to set that house on fire, and that was my revenge.

A. B., Baranovich, age 16

Such a big city, such a beautiful city, with so many walls and such wealth, began to be liquidated and little by little, little by little, to be wiped out. We began hearing rumors from Luninets that things were even worse there, and from Radin we heard that things were even more bitter there.

One beautiful morning, my dad did not stay. A day went by, two days – vanished, just like a stone thrown into deep water. Then, on the fifth day, at dusk, he came back. “Fradel, Pessia-Rachel, pack your things,” he ordered, “because a ride out of the city awaits us.” Luckily for us, the sky grew cloudy when we said goodbye to Baranovich. Only my Dad went back to the city. It was not long before he came back with the sewing machine.

The Pole with whom we stayed was called Aniske, a poor, quiet man, and, as my Dad was a harness-maker, a really skilled craftsman, Aniske used to collect work from the neighboring villages, and my dad used to do the work. Aniske was constantly on his guard. Whenever anyone started walking up to his cottage, he pulled on the cord, and we knew we had to stop making a noise with the sewing machine. As time went by, Aniske used to feed us news, despite the work. Baranovich was already *judenfrei*; a

party called “Bulbovtsi” had been established. We made light of this and told him not to be afraid.

One day, he was in a bad mood when he came down to see us. First of all, he was being strongly criticized for visiting the neighboring villages so often and, secondly, the Bulbovtsi had started taking strong measures against “traitors to the people,” which is what they called people who hid Jews. In short, the work had to be stopped completely and the group expelled or, at least, made smaller. The lot fell on my dad. He went out and, after three days of wandering about, he succeeded in finding a hiding place for two people at the home of one of the Bulbovtsi chiefs, whom he had managed to convince that the leader of the Bulbovtsi himself was also hiding Jews, because he also thought that the war would finally come to an end, together with the parties, and then things would go well – for capitalists. My dad sent me and my mom to the headman, Mayan, and went back to Stobovets on his own, where he and my sister remained – without work.

When the grain in the fields had grown as high as a man, I stealthily began to visit my dad. Finally, my elder sister, Pessia-Rachel, suggested, “Let’s meet every Sabbath in the sloping wheat field on the fourth hill opposite the Russian Orthodox Church, then you’ll only have to walk half the way, and I’ll walk half the way, and we’ll talk about everything under the sun.” It was midday the first time I made my way into the wheat field, and when the stalks began to rustle, I started whistling, until my sister appeared. We used to lie there in the grain the whole day, and say goodbye to each other in the evening. At our second “rendez-vous,” she told me, “Dad has gone back to quilting.”

Another Sabbath dawn – dark, pouring with rain, the heavens lamenting, and a wind blowing. This time – for no particular reason – I did not feel like going, but mom really pushed me out. I lay in the wheat field for an hour, two hours, soaked to the skin, but nobody came. During the day, when the sky had become a little lighter, I heard a song:

You pressed my breast
Against you.
In silence,
You gazed at me.

Pessia-Rachel! I almost fainted when I saw her, bare-breasted and dishevelled, her eyes full of pain. She ran towards me, shouting, “Do you want to hang me too?!” I started to kiss her, stroke her, plead with her: “Pessele, little sister ...” But she did not recognize me and kept on demanding, “Why did you hang my dad, eh?!” As she screamed the last words, she grabbed me round the throat, trying to strangle me, and when I tried to free myself, she began biting my hands. In the final seconds, I began pulling her hair, turned her over, and began rolling with her until I managed to disappear into a dense field of corn.

My sister continued to shout, “Just like them! Hang like a stork! Did you have to mention the word ‘Shachno’³⁰?! Toro Bachno? You weren’t too ill to claim that they called you Adolf, Rex, Paul; but you, Jew, apostate! I spit on Europe, the bastard! I spit on the noose.”

When mom asked me, “What’s the news about them?” I replied, “Adieu Aniske. A neighbor had moved in there with a dog, a lion. Aniske stated categorically, ‘If you show yourself [here] once more, I’ll inform on all four of you!’” And, at the same time, I showed her the marks where the dog had bitten me. Once my mom had a bad dream and woke up with a

start. She had seen Shachno hanging from a cherry tree and Pessia-Rachel dancing naked below. Nothing I said was any use. She just lay there and wept.

In the meantime, Mayan came down with some roasted potatoes. That was the daily ration. He was astonished to hear the weeping. "What is this?" he asked.

I went up to him and said, "What did you think, that you were feeding pigs?"

All night for several nights, with strangled voices, we howled, "For your health, for Poloshke, for your four little children," and it did not take long for Mayan to bring down a lantern and a bowl of soup. But my mom got it into her head that the lantern was Hitler's soul and that the soup was Jewish blood. She grabbed hold of the bowl and poured all the soup onto the flickering lantern. Fortunately Mayan had already closed the little door a long time before and did not notice how dark it had become in the hiding place. I gathered up the beans from the ground and swallowed them greedily. Because of the hunger and the darkness my mother gradually regained her senses and no longer spoke about the bad dream.

M. Bochlinsk, Klevan, age 14

Our town numbered more than 3000 Jews. The first pogrom took place on July 2, 1941, when 645 Jews were forced into the Great Synagogue and shot. Later, there were three round-ups for death and [forced] labor. On July 11, 1942, the second pogrom took place, in which close to 2000 Jews were buried in a lime pit.

Later on, an amnesty was announced for those Klevan Jews who were lying in underground hiding places, and 80 bunker people, together with more than 200 from the nearby shtetlach of Olyka, Ignatovka, and Rovno gave themselves up, because they wanted to benefit from the amnesty. Three days later, the last 300 people were thrown into a lime pit, and a sign fluttered over the whole area, declaring, "Klevan is *judenrein*."

Once, wandering about near the farmhouses of Olishev, I came across a Ukrainian in a stable where Yeshaya Shwartz, the harness-maker, was working. Yeshaya Shwartz himself was from Zamość. He was a skilled craftsman, and his work was sold as novelties. Fearful that I might give him away, Levke³¹ would not let me go, so I helped Sharf [sic] and did not go back to the ghetto. A week, two weeks, went by in this way; we worked, and Levke used to sell the reins in Rovno. On July 11, Levke brought us the terrible news that Klevan was burning.

After this last massacre, Levke grew frightened and chased both of us away. We went down into the trenches of Olishev, where we came upon a wild ditch, where no human being had ever set foot since the world began. That was where we found our home – in ancient foxes' dens. During the night, the ditch was filled with the howling of animals. But the worst animal at that time was a human being.

The trenches began half a kilometer from the ditch, then came the hills, and beyond them were fields. In one of the fields, we found a large crop of carrots. Night after night, we worked until dawn carrying supplies back to our hiding place. Three animal lairs were filled with carrots, and when we [later] dug them up, stacked them in piles and covered them with earth, we took off our shirts and carried supplies for the whole winter in them.

We did our sleeping during the day, because we had to battle with the animals at night. Hares, foxes, and deer used to come to eat the carrots, and we had to stand there with

sticks and whistle piercingly. We were as afraid of wild boars as of the Gestapo. We used to fight with the smaller ones, but when a bigger one appeared with a murderous scream, we used to shrink back into our hiding place. That winter, both of us had frozen feet and ears, which began to fester. Even worse was that we had no scissors. I looked like a girl, while Sharf [sic], who was older than I was and already had a beard, grew one like Karl Marx during that period. I began calling him "Dad."

Things became wilder in the summer. Ukraine was ablaze. We couldn't find out who was actually systematically going on the rampage. We even witnessed fires. Every night, villages and settlements, mostly Polish ones, went up in flames. We used to wander about in the burned-out villages, scraping things out of cellars for our existence. And once again we found a full-grown crop of carrots, and once again we began storing up supplies. The orchards of the burned-out villages also let us see the world. We carried apples and pears back to "our" ditch. They froze in the cold and made a better nibble than Wedel's chocolate.³²

One frosty night, Sharf [sic] wrestled with a fox. The fox bit his hand, which became more and more swollen with every passing day. And, at the same time, we began to hear the thundering of artillery in the distance. We decided to go to a human being to have his hand bandaged and to get some news at the same time. We met a deformed peasant woman. She did not understand who these "lunatics" were, but she told us that there were already battles at the River Horyn. We decided to press on and cross the front line. I did cross the front line, but "Dad" died in the snow.

Asher Bickman, Stolyn, age 14

After the last massacre, we ran away into the forest – I, my sister S., my mother L., and myself. In the forest, we met four more people, and we began to dig a hiding place together. Not wanting to be in contact with people, we fed ourselves from the gardens, orchards, and from the cellars. On one occasion, we heard the song:

Ich weiss nicht, was soll es bedeuten,
dass ich so traurig bin ...³³

We ran out of our hiding place and began fleeing into the bushes. The Germans, who were out walking, were also frightened for a short while, but they pulled themselves together and opened fire on us. We ran deeper into the bushes. Only my mother was wounded. She fell over and remained lying on the ground. The Germans surrounded her like hungry wolves. After she had been raped, the shortest one shot her with his Parabellum pistol.

The hiding place was shattered by a grenade. We lay where we were as if made of stone, until darkness fell, then we buried the victim and moved on to another small valley. There, we dug a hiding place, and started to steal things from gardens, orchards, cellars, etc. again. At that time, my sister, S., started losing her mind. We had to put up with a great deal of trouble from her. The situation became so bad that we were given an ultimatum: "Leave the hiding place with your sister! If you don't, then we'll leave!"

I put off the decision for a week, two weeks, but S. became louder. From time to time, she became angry, demanding, "*Dardareno*, where is justice?! *Dardareno*, where is the God

of vengeance?! Where is Stalin?!"³⁴ Then she began to walk freely and openly in the forest, arguing with the heavens. I simply had to hand her over to them. Two men went away with her to another forest and came back without my sister. Hellfire began to blaze in my heart. I prayed silently that we would all be discovered and shot. And when death did not come, I lost my appetite. Three days and nights passed without bread, without sleep, and without my sister. And then God heard my prayer, and we heard the forest "speaking words."

Everyone turned as white as chalk. Someone said that we should lie there, another one began to get dressed, and a third began to get undressed. The fourth one began to run out and we all ran out after him. We did not know where we were running to, until we ran right into their hands. They were Soviet partisans from Bolitsky's battalion.

P. Tabachnik, Varkovichi, age 15

In the ghetto, we began to detect the smell of the coming pogrom, and premonitions of death flickered across people's faces. At that time, the German press was proclaiming Germany's colossal victory, its huge triumph in the distant East. At the same time, terrible announcements were flying around: "This city is also already *judenfrei*" and "that city, too, is also *judenfrei*." On top of that, several hundred Uzbeks, Soviet prisoners of war, came down and began digging graves.

Anyone from Varkovichi who still had his own corner continued to stay in the ghetto, in the mistaken belief that he would be safe. But refugees, on the other hand, already understood that the hour had struck and that they had to leave Varkovichi.

Although my sister was reluctant, I made her run away with me from work straightaway. Taking extreme care, we began wandering past the villages, and eventually arrived at the Polish settlement of Chodorov. My sister was well known for her beauty, thanks to which the Sambarski family took a liking to her, especially the eldest child of the family, Zygmunt, who fell in love with her. Sambarski owned an orchard of close to four hectares and, since he did not have anywhere to go with his fruit, he put us to work cutting up apples and pears for drying. He nailed down the lids of hundreds of boxes of dried apples, pears, and plums in this way.

When the Banderovtsi established themselves, they gave Sambarski an ultimatum: "Hand over all your fruit, or else!" Although Sambarski signed a document saying that all the fruit had been sold, he was still fearful that they would search his smallholding and find something worse than fruit. Zygmunt suggested digging a bunker in the cellar and hiding the boxes and the Jews there, and that is what was done. We slaved away like bears for four days and nights, until the bunker was finished. It was extraordinarily well camouflaged, so that anybody entering the cellar would never think that there was a hiding place there. Zygmunt was head over heels in love with my Stissia and used to lie among the boxes with us all day.

One day, there was a commotion in the yard. Zygmunt could not bear to stay in the bunker, sprang to his feet and jumped out like a lion, camouflaging the entrance behind him, and joined his family. There was machine-gun fire and then silence. The Sambarski family had to surrender.

The Banderovtsi took all seven of them, tied their hands and feet, and threw them down the well. Both barns, the stable, and the farmhouse were set on fire. From the cellar they

took pork, beef, the barrel of cabbage and pickles, overturned them, and then smashed them to pieces.

The next night, the whole of Chodorov was burned down. Although the settlement had been turned into an empty cemetery, we were afraid to crawl out of the bunker, and we lay there like that for many long months, cut off from the big, sunlit world.

Then, we heard a melody full of longing coming from the outside world, and we pricked up our ears as we listened to the words:

No songs are heard on the deck,
Stormy is the Black Sea,
A silent, piercing wind is blowing,
So that when you remember,
Your heart aches.

They were Soviet partisans not Banderovtsi.

M. Misholov, Davidgrudak (David-Horodok), age 15

Our city counted more than 7000 Jews. The first *Aktion* took place on June 6, 1941.³⁵ All the Jews were forced into the square. The males age 14 or over were singled out to die, and the women were to be deported. I shall never forget the scene when my father, Shloime Misholov, was delegated to go to the German sadists to ransom the community. After they had taken the gold, two tall Germans (one wearing a pince-nez) took my father down to the gigantic bridge, where they hurled him into the depths of the river.

That day, I was lucky and unlucky – lucky because I was not yet 14 years old, and unhappy because I already understood that *Mein Kampf* now ruled Europe. That very same day, Davidgrudak became *judenfrei*. Two weeks after the terrible slaughter, women and children gradually began returning to the shtetl, and when their number reached 1140 they were murdered in a pogrom.

It was then that I began living in the forest under the leadership of Commandant Samoil Patrontash. Once, in the winter, there was a raid on the forest. Patrontash gave the order, “Die!” Those who buried themselves under the snow stayed alive, while those who wanted to save themselves from the blockade were shot. When we were burying them, Patrontash berated himself and those of us who still remained: “He who pursues life always finds a bullet! When the order, ‘Die!’ is given, there must be no movement! You must not hand yourself over to the murderers! All demoralizers [read cowards] will have such an end!”

Thirteen days after this dreadful event, there was a second raid. Commandant Patrontash, seeing that the Germans were advancing from a different direction ordered, “D-i-e!” This time, the Germans were observing us through binoculars and wrong-footed us. When they surrounded us, they took all the “dead” with them.

That time, three demoralizers who tried to run away from the gunfire lost their lives. I could not bear the sight of the forest any longer. Furthermore, the others were keeping their distance from me, so I took myself off to a familiar Polish Christian woman, Anna Cherko, telling her that the partisans had sent me to her for six to eight days until the raids in the forest had ended. Anna Cherko, frightened by the word “partisans,” prepared a place for me in her barn, with the cattle. As time passed, I changed into a “calf.” That way, I did not have to depend on Anna’s favors. I convinced her that my

life in the forest had made me used to not eating for three or four days and nights at a time, and that I did not need more than 100 grams of bread a day, and that I hated cooked food as much as I hated the Gestapo. Cherko began to respect me, and would not let me leave until the Germans attacked the village and I had to escape the fire.

The Germans attacked me from the hills, and the Banderovtzi came out of the forests, but my horse was a three-year-old and galloped like the wind. Thanks to the horse, I escaped from both fires. Where did I ride to? How many circles of hell did I pass through? And what tricks did I get up to in order to save myself? I do not want to compromise myself.

Batya Durchin, Pinsk, age 17

Our city numbered almost 30,000 Jews. By means of a solid “democratic” gesture, 7300 men were summoned for registration on July 1, 1941. The registered men were invited to the nearby airfield, which was located beyond Dobraya Volya. The airfield was immediately surrounded by explosives, artillery, and infantry with machine-guns. The Jews were given an ultimatum – the airfield must be raised by a meter within 24 hours, or else it would be raised with flesh. No contribution helped. Neither did any gold. Two delegations that were sent out with projects³⁶ were murderously accepted to join the condemned, and the Dobraya Volya airfield was raised with flesh and blood!

It had already become obvious that one should not be found among Jews. My family, which had thrown everything together and had started to dream about growing wings and flying away and temporary isolation, understood this. Being some distance away from the ghetto, we only heard rumors about the second pogrom, which took place in the ghetto, which was sentenced to death by starvation and typhus, and about the hundreds hurled into the depths of the River Styr.

And so on. And so, more tragic. And so, more horrible.

Only 13 witnesses of beautiful Jewish Pinsk were left – 13 out of 30,000!!

Let this not be forgotten!

Miriam Trostman, Rokitno, age 10

At dawn on the Sabbath, a decree was proclaimed: “Whoever does not go to the square will be shot!” And when we arrived at the square the Commandant sounded his whistle, and the square immediately filled with Gestapo men, as numerous as poppy seeds. The young people broke away from the line and started to run away to the nearby forest. Me and my mom also ran away, losing my Dad and two brothers.

After three days of hunger, we tried to go to a nearby village to beg for bread. A German caught us and started taking us back to the town to be shot. In the meantime, he spotted a bigger group of Jews creeping out of a valley and ran over to them. In the meantime, we disappeared into a field of grain.

We wanted to go back to the forest, but a second German came driving along. He had not noticed us, and he drove by about two meters away from us, singing proudly:

Die Luft ist kühl, und es dunkelt,
und ruhig fließt der Rhein ...³⁷

Wandering in the forest, we found more Jews in a clearing, roasting potatoes over a fire. Germans noticed the smell and began firing at the clearing, so we ran away, leaving four victims behind. Later on, we went to the cottage of the Ukrainian, Mikhail Barshchok. After two weeks, he heard rumors about how the Germans were shooting Ukrainians who were in contact with Jews. Barshchok threw us out.

We went back into the forest and, not meeting anyone, we wandered about in the grain fields of the village of Liene. We had to run away from Liene and returned to the forest. After three months of wandering, we chanced upon a hiding place, where my father, Yechiel, and my elder brother, Moshe, were. Three days after this great joy, a truck full of Germans drove into the forest and a raid took place. We were drowning in a swamp. My father was discovered in the bushes, and the German bandits demanded that he tell them where the people were. When they did not receive a reply, they put out both his eyes and shouted at him, "Run away to Palestine!" Then they ran him over with the truck and killed him.

We lay in the swamp for two days and nights. My mother was crying and tearing her hair out, shouting, "Why do I deserve this?! Why has this happened to the Jews?! For what?!!" We wandered back to the village of Liene and, as we were passing the hill with the graves of thousands of innocent people who had been shot, we heard a shout in German: "Dance!" We saw two Germans standing in front of a naked girl and demanding that she dance on the graves. She began dancing, and a shot rang out immediately.

In Liene, we were taken in by a Ukrainian, Svistun, who hid us in his attic. We stayed there for six weeks, until the Germans began burning Liene down. We settled down in our forest hiding place again. The only person we were in touch with, out of all humanity, was Svistun, whom we knew.

Once, my brother went out into the forest to look for thin branches to heat up a little the stove, buried in the north wall of the hiding place, and he did not come back. The next day, we thought the boy had gone mad, because he was shouting across the forest, "Death to the German occupiers!" "Long live the Soviet Union!" "Long live the liberators of Europe!" "Long live Comrade Stalin!" Looking out of the hiding place, I saw a partisan squad with red flowers. At their head strode my brother, festooned with grenades.

Dora Chazan, Lutsk, age 17

Our shtetl numbered more than 24,000 Jews. On July 18, 1941, the Gestapo tricked almost 3000 Jews into registering, and they were taken to the Yarov Forest in gas vans. Not a week went by without *Feiertag*³⁸ demanding a contribution, and not a week went by without a new evil decree being drawn up. Not a week went by without another *Aktion*. On August 16, 1942, Lutsk was dragged into massacre.

The ghetto put up stiff resistance. The uprising lasted for two weeks before it was put down and the resisters were forced to jump into the Styr naked and wounded, in front of film cameras. Many people escaped into the forests, where they were later gradually wiped out. I lost my father, my mother, two brothers, and a younger sister, and ran away on my

own. A certain childless Polish woman, P—tch, from the village of Hormatniv, took me in because I promised her that I would convert to Christianity.

When the battles began to rage between the Banderovtsi and the Poles, and Polish settlements began burning, P—tch's cottage was burned down. Leaving the mountain of ashes behind, we made our way to Lutsk, to her sister, Jadwiga P—tch.

We were walking along Novostrenye Street, when a Ukrainian grabbed me and shouted, "*Zhidovka* [Jewess], I know you!"

P—tch protested, "She's my cousin."

In the meantime, some Germans came over to us and we were both arrested. They began to take me for interrogation twice a week. P—tch regretted her foolishness and murderously managed to get herself released from the proceedings.³⁹ I, on the other hand, having nothing to lose, stuck to my story, which was made more plausible because of my profile, which was very Polish-looking. Also, one of the Polish women who had been arrested declared that she was my aunt (in accordance with the family I had invented).

After three months of investigation and questioning, I was released and ordered (in German),

"Home!"

I asked (in Polish), "What is the gentleman saying?"

"You are free to go," was the reply (in German).

"I don't understand anything," I said (in Polish).

"Are you a Jew?" I was asked (in German).

"What is the gentleman saying?" I asked (in Polish).

Because I had remained alert the whole time and also thanks to my arrested "aunt," I was eventually released. That evening was one of the most dreadful times I have ever lived through.

I had already become used to the ration, to the warmth, to the interrogations, to the arrested women. And now, suddenly to be driven out of paradise into the bloody, bestial, murderous world, naked, barefoot, hungry, and wretched! Where to go? Where? Knowing only that I must not spend too much time dreaming at the prison gate, I ran into the nearby Polish church. The sexton had already wanted to lock the gates of the house of God twice but, seeing a child in floods of bloody tears, he took me upstairs to the priest. When he entered, the priest came over to me, stood looking at me, and then asked me, "Israelite?" I started to cry even more. The priest calmed me down: "Dear child, if you want to stay alive, come with me, but remember: you must not utter one word of Yiddish!"

He took me to the convent and introduced me to the nuns: "This is Rena. Her parents were shot by the Bulbovti. She has strayed from the straight and narrow, and needs to repent. Bring her under the wings of Jesus!" As time passed, I became a prime example and a symbol of virtue and obedience. The nuns often reprimanded the other children and said to them, "Why don't you all sleep like Rena?!" "Why don't you all pray like Rena?!" "Why don't you all kneel like Rena?!" "Why aren't you all reliable like Rena?!" R-e-n-a!!

After six months of "holiness and purity," they dragged me off to church for afternoon prayers. As I knelt there, I noticed that the person next to the person next to me was

making nasty faces at me and really wanted to devour me with her jealous eyes. Knowing that this could lead to a confrontation, I stood up and ran straight back to the convent as fast as I could.

After the prayers had ended, the nun turned on me: "What have you done?!"

I tried to defend myself and told her, "You almost gave me a heart attack!"

She slapped my face and threw me out. In the morning, she reported me to the priest. He ordered, "Because of that, don't let her set foot in God's house for a whole year!" I started to do penance in the convent again.

Hearing that there were already Soviet Katyusha rockets and Olyusha missiles in Jagielonska Street, I told the nuns, "I'm going out to see the Soviets."

The nuns looked at me in astonishment and exclaimed,

"R-e-n-a! Whom are you attracted to? To the atheists?!"

"I must go!"

"R-e-n-a!"

"Let me out, I'm Jewish!!"

"What?! Have you gone mad?! You're a *zhidovka*?! Ha, ha, ha!"

The laughter infuriated me, and I threw the door open, shouting, "I am a Jewish girl, one survivor out of 24,000 Jews! I must go and greet the liberators of Europe, who have given me back the right to exist!" When I saw the first tank, I got caught by the tank tracks. I fainted, and a captain picked me up.

Miriam Manis, Tuchin near Rovno, age 13

When I found myself in the forest by chance, with my mother (Sheindl) and younger sister, Serke, we heard terrible gunfire coming from the ghetto. The Pole, Jan Boginski, told us that more than 500 Gestapo men and Ukrainian militiamen had surrounded the ghetto, which had prepared in advance to put up heroic resistance. All the houses were set on fire with fuel stored in advance for the purpose. The Gestapo men were confused and thought that the Jews were running to put out the flames, but they heroically went into battle with the besiegers. Altogether, 55 Ukrainian militiamen were killed, together with more than 100 Gestapo men. There was no booty for "Greater Germany" in the ghetto.

Of the 5600 people who had been in the ghetto, nearly 3000 escaped to the large forest called Kudrinka, to which Jews from Kostopol,⁴⁰ Korets,⁴¹ and other massacred shtetlach had already found their way. Nearly 80 hiding places were created in the Kudrinka Forest, one of which held 300 people. We received food supplies from the nearby villages. The smoke revealed our hiding places. One day, German and Hungarian soldiers descended on the forest and began a terrible raid. All the hiding places were torn apart by heavy grenades and machine-gun fire. The commotion and shouting went as far as the XXX.⁴² The plague had triumphed. Our hiding place was the only one to be covered with felled tree trunks, and, thanks to this, the grenades could not do any harm. When the unprecedented night fell, we began wandering from hiding place to hiding place, and could not find a living soul. Dead people, dead people, feet, hands, heads!

We were afraid to stay in the dead forest with its leafless trees, so, that very same night, we ran away to the Pole, Jan Boginski, and hid in a pile of straw without his knowledge. We stayed there for four days and nights. From there, we ran away to the Ukrainian woman, Pavlina Pachinska, where we dug a deep hiding place next to her well. We opened a small doorway inside the well itself and covered over the upper surface completely. We stayed in that dark hiding place for almost six months. The Germans began burning down Ukrainian villages. Pavlina Pachinska was among those whose homes were burned down. And that was when our tragedy began.

Pavlina was afraid to come into the village, because visiting her burned-out farmhouse might arouse suspicion. During that time, many days and nights without bread came and went, and we were dying for a drop of water, when we were sleeping right next to the spring that fed the well. One dark night, Pavlina dug us up and sent us out into Hitler's world. We began wandering in the forests until we met the Ukrainian woman, Marina Bushkova, who kept us alive. We dug a hiding place in the thick tundra. We were careful about smoke, coughing, and so on. We lay in the tundra in the dark for a long, long time, until we heard Marina call out, "They are already here, the Soviets!"

S. Sh., Senkevichevka, Volynhia, age 16

At that time our shtetl did not yet know about the Gestapo's ideologies, and no city yet knew about anything, because it happened during the first weeks of the occupation. And since Senkevichevka is a long way from the area of the main road and the railway, nobody had yet seen a German snout.

In the meantime, school had finished, and when my friend, Tadzia R., went to pay a visit to her relatives in the Polish settlement of Sinikov, she invited me, and I went with her. That must have been on July 12 or 13, 1942.

Her aunt, Maria R., was very taken with me. We spent five days in the settlement until Maria let us go. Word went round among the neighbors that I was Tadzia's sister. When we got back to the shtetl, we did not recognize it. There was a deathly silence, just like after the biblical Flood. At my house, the front door and windows were wide open, the cupboards smashed, overturned, hammered, as if demons had been busy there for decades.

I did not know whether to cry or laugh, so I ran away to my friend. There I found Tadzia crying, and when her parents saw her they began sobbing, too. She said to me, "Crawl up into our attic." Later on, Tadzia brought me up some bread and butter, saying sorrowfully, "You no longer have a mother or a father. You are an orphan. You no longer have your two little brothers, either." When I burst into tears, Yozia [sic] jumped up, gesturing with her hand and exclaiming, "Do you want to get me killed? Be quiet! Robbing peasants are already here! You're very lucky that you went away! The robbers, in high spirits, rounded up all the Jews, told them to dig graves, and shot them. Then, whether they had been shot dead or not, the robbers threw them into the graves and covered them with soil. And if there were any bulges, they drove over the ground until it had been flattened." Very early the next morning, before sunrise, Yozia [sic] smuggled me back to Sinikov [sic], where I was passed off as a Polish girl for the whole time.

Some words to the younger generation

Dear pupils,

With great pity and sadness have I recorded your bloodstained memories, struggles, pain, horror, shock, and utter loneliness. These are not simply accounts of what happened; they are historical tears for the sin⁴³ committed against our generation. This is a historical accusation against Hitler Germany!

If the great man of lamentation, Jeremiah, were to rise from his grave and see the terrible horror that occurred in our epoch, he would tear his lamentations into a thousand pieces and throw them to the winds.

The horrifying tragedy of our epoch makes its atrocities stand out. Jeremiah's "precious sons of Zion comparable to fine gold"⁴⁴ were forced into captivity. But at a time when hundreds of thousands of our brothers and sisters were forced into the death factories and the flames of the crematoria in Maidanek, Sobibor, and other places, one Warsaw is more dreadful than all the fallen in the destruction of Jerusalem; one Łódź Ghetto exceeds all the Jews expelled from Spain, both in numbers and in tragedy. In one day, Rovno lost more victims than Spain in the 13 years of the Inquisition!

Professor Graetz⁴⁵ once portrayed the Jewish people in two caricatures. On the one side was a skull floating on the water – a weak, landless Jew, staff in hand, who had already been wandering for thousands of years, asking plaintively, "Where is my home?" On the other side [was a Jew depicted as] a spiritual hero, a saint who gave humanity knowledge, ethics, light, and godliness.

Hitler Germany pledged itself to eradicate the "eternal wanderer," proclaiming to the world, "The sun will shine more brightly on the world once the last Jew has been annihilated!"

On the bewitched black horizons, the Gestapo began operating with the greatest pathos [sic] and quaking [sic]. Day and night, the transports were driven to the slaughter. Day and night, the convoys of the condemned streamed towards the death factories, the extermination camps, the crematoria of Auschwitz, Maidanek, Treblinka, Belsen, Sobibor, Dachau, Stutthof, etc. The skies grew black from the systematic⁴⁶ smoke, the smoke of life, the smoke of thousands of souls, the souls of our mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers! You must never forget this!!

In Gdansk, in one of the buildings of the Institute of Hygiene of the German Academy of Medicine, a chemical soap production laboratory was discovered. In large underground cellars, nine big, hermetically sealed concrete vats were found, filled with human bodies with their heads chopped off, preserved in formalin. And tens more of such laboratories were found, where Hitler Germany indulged in making scented soap from our sisters and brothers!⁴⁷

In the death factories, there were actually sadists who used to entertain themselves with our unfortunates: gouging out their eyes; cutting off parts of their noses and ears; cutting off women's breasts; raping the "prettier" ones in public; forcing girls and women to hang their sisters, and fathers their sons; pushing adults and children into burning ovens alive; standing with good cigarettes outside the window of the gas chamber and triumphantly watching people being asphyxiated by the gas, and so on, and so on. That is how the Germans caroused over our dreadful catastrophe.

Yes, day and night the large transports streamed in. Young and old, women and children, shoemakers and doctors, patrons and professors – all, all had the right to have a

shower in the showers over which fluttered the slogan, “Arbeit macht das Leben süß.”⁴⁸ Taking the piece of soap and the towel, going to wash – and then to be asphyxiated! And burned! And ground up!

There were no death factories in the Ukraine. There, the spectacle of *Aktionen*, ghettos, and carrying out pogroms in the ghettos unfolded – that is to say, forcing thousands of Jews to the graves and then shooting them, leaving a camp to the sound of an orchestra playing the well-known “Tango Smierdzi.” And, in the end, wiping out the camp, too.

And when people hiding in *bunkers* tried to save themselves in the forests the man-hunts began. The Gestapo had barely become aware that Jews were wandering about in such-and-such a place, when machine-guns and mortars thundered away at that ravine, because the battle to exterminate the witnesses was extreme and sanctified.

And when some of the surviving wanderers were turned into wild animals, burying themselves in endless underground tunnels, where mortars were unable to help implement Julius Streicher’s ultimate statement,⁴⁹ Berlin helped set up three new Ukrainian parties in the spirit and tradition of the Gestapo to annihilate the witnesses.

They were the so-called “Banderovtsi,” “Bulbovtsi,” and “Melnikovtsi,” which had been organized by Berlin confidants [sic] specifically in connection with the Jewish question, and had been ordered to “root out the remaining wanderers, who will [bury you tomorrow and] cover over your graves!” The Gestapo gave them weapons and ammunition, and sent them to the forests with orders to “root them out! Fight against them like against the communists,⁵⁰ which have given them privileges!” and so on, and so on.

You must never forget this:

Until there comes a time without bombs, without cannon
Dreadful fronts of fire,
Germany will spread the many millions
Of shot people on the horror-horizon.⁵¹

Because such guilt cannot be kept quiet and will never be kept quiet. The innocent oceans of blood and tears, the innocent mountains of ashes, will not rest in peace until Hitler Germany is turned into a curse for generations, into a symbol of ruin and devastation. Germany will be wounded for ever.

Your SOS shall not be silenced, your flames not extinguished. It will “shudder” in shame and derision before all humanity!

Shlomo Tsam

[Handwritten note: Obtained 1.11.1945]

Notes

1. This collection of about 7300 testimonies, of which more than 400 are by children, is today kept in the Jewish Historical Institute (Żydowski Instytut Historyczny – ŻIH) in Warsaw (record group AŻIH 301); Yad Vashem has a copy (record group M.49.E). Maria Hochberg-Mariańska and Noe Grüss edited 55 of the child testimonies in *The Children Accuse* (Warsaw: *Dzieci Oskarżają*, 1947; Engl. transl. London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1996). About a quarter of these testimonies are also included in Grüss’s Yiddish edition of child testimonies, *Kinder-Martyrologie* (Buenos Aires: Unión Central Israelita Polace en la Argentina, 1947). In 2008, a further 55 child

testimonies were published in German by Feliks Tych, Alfons Kenkmann, Elisabeth Kohlhaas, and Andreas Eberhardt, eds, *Kinder über den Holocaust. Frühe Zeugnisse 1944–1948* (Berlin: Metropol, 2008). Summaries in Polish and English of all testimonies in the CJHC's collection can be found in ŻIH, *Relacje czasów zagłady inwentarz: Archiwum ŻIH IN-B, zespół 301. Holocaust Survivor Testimonies Catalogue: Jewish Historical Institute Archives, Record Group 301*, 6 vols (Warsaw [s.n.], 1998ff). http://www.usmmm.org/online/hsv/source_view.php?SourceId=32590.

2. YIVO Archives, Record Group 225: Hersch Wasser Collection, 1939–46, item 2.9. Judy Grossman and Sidney Lightman translated the Yiddish manuscript into English. We would like to thank these translators for their work. The translations and the archival work carried out for this project were financially supported by a Faculty Research Fund grant from Newcastle University. We would also like to thank the director and the archivists at YIVO for their help; Tsam's daughter, Rosaline Barron, for her help with establishing biographical information about her father; Robert Shapiro, who brought the manuscript to our notice; and Anat Shabo, who supplied us with materials written by and about Tsam.
3. Tsam's Bytom notebook is not the only text he wrote about the Holocaust. In his contribution to the Yizkor book on Olyka, he explains, "I have written extensively about the gruesome events that took place during the five-year war, pogroms and massacres. My writings, *The Eternal Ban*, *Days of Awe*, *Stories Told by Youth* and *The Fiery Sunset*, which were submitted to the historic commissions in Warsaw, Prague and München not only describe the tragedy of my town, Olyk, not only the tragedy of Ukrainian Jewry, but also the events from Vladivostok to Berlin." Shlomo Tsam, "The Last Date: 15 Av, 1942" [July 29, 1942], in *Pinkas ha-kehilah Olyka: sefer yizkor* [Memorial book of the community of Olyka], ed. Natan Livneh (Tel Aviv: Olyka Society, 1972), 331. For an English translation of this memorial book, see JewishGen at: <http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/Olyka/Olyka.html> (accessed March 3, 2012). The title *Stories Told by Youth* clearly refers to his Bytom notebook.
4. The text translates as "Compiled by the Principal of the Hebrew School in Bytom, S. Tsam."
5. We give place names in their Yiddish version as used by Tsam in the manuscript.
6. Reading the testimonies, one can see that not all the children were proud of choices they made during the Holocaust and or felt at ease to speak about them. Children learned to hide their identity during the Holocaust and continued concealing their identity here.
7. We decided to give the children's names as given by Tsam: full names or initials where children requested. We believe that this is an important part of the historical and cultural record. Efforts were undertaken to identify and consult former pupils of Tsam who are still alive today. These activities included online searches, features and articles in the Israeli press, broadcasts on Israeli state radio, and a search in the *Journal of the Association of Jewish Refugees* (June 2011, 15, http://www.ajr.org.uk/journalpdf/2011_June.pdf). We also disseminated information about the project and a request for survivors to contact us via the following mailing lists: exploring_childhood_studies@email.rutgers.edu and info@child-survivors-deutschland.de.
8. For a detailed discussion of this issue, see Beate Müller, "Trauma, Historiography and Polyphony: Adult Voices in the CJHC's Early Postwar Child Holocaust Testimonies," *History and Memory* 24, no. 2 (2012): 157–95.
9. On the historical commissions see Laura Jockusch, *Collect and Record! Jewish Holocaust Documentation in Early Postwar Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).
10. See Boaz Cohen, "The Children's Voice: Postwar Collection of Testimonies from Child Survivors of the Holocaust," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 21, no. 1 (2007): 74–95.
11. Benjamin Tenenbaum, *Echad me-ir ve shna'im me-mishpacha* [One of a city and two of a family: a selection from amongst one thousand autobiographies of Jewish children in Poland] (Merhavayah: Sifriat Poalim, 1947). The testimonies collected by Tenenbaum are accessible in the archive of the Ghetto Fighters' House Museum in Israel.
12. Susan L. Berger, "The Children's Advocate, Janusz Korczak," *American Educational History Journal* 33, no. 2 (2006): 137–42.

13. See Jeffrey Shandler, ed., *Awakening Lives: Autobiographies of Jewish Youth in Poland before the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).
14. Genia Silkes, "Algemayner araynfir tsum fregeboygen far kinder," in *Metodologishe onvizungen tsum oysforshen dem khurbn fun poylishe yidntum* [General introduction to the questionnaire for children, methodological instructions for the research of the destruction of Polish Jewry] (Łódź: Central Council for Jews in Poland, 1945).
15. Hochberg-Mariańska and Grüss, *The Children Accuse*, xxix–xxx.
16. See, for instance, Henry Greenspan, *The Awakening of Memory: Survivor Testimony in the First Years after the Holocaust, and Today* (Washington: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2001); Christopher R. Browning, *Collected Memories: Holocaust History and Postwar Testimony* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003).
17. Joanna Michlic, *Jewish Children in Nazi-Occupied Poland: Early Post-War Recollections of Survival and Polish–Jewish Relations during the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2008); Emunah Nachmany Gafny, *Dividing Hearts: The Removal of Jewish Children from Gentile Families in Poland in the Immediate Post-Holocaust Years* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009); Nachum Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers: The Rescue of Hidden Jewish Children in Poland* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009); Müller, "Trauma, Historiography and Polyphony;" Boaz Cohen and Rita Horvath, "Young Witnesses in the DP Camps: Children's Holocaust Testimony in Context," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 11, no. 1 (2012): 103–25; Carsten Gansel and Paweł Zimniak, eds, *Kriegskindheiten und Erinnerungsarbeit: Zur historischen und literarischen Verarbeitung von Krieg und Vertreibung* (Berlin: Schmidt, 2012).
18. See e.g. Jürgen Matthäus, ed., *Approaching an Auschwitz Survivor: Holocaust Testimony and its Transformations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Sharon Kangisser Cohen, *Child Survivors of the Holocaust in Israel: "Finding their Voice" – Social Dynamics and Post-war Experiences* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2005). The well-known Kestenberg Archive of interviews with more than 1500 child survivors, conducted in the 1980s, is available online at: <http://www.hum.huji.ac.il/english/units.php?cat=4328&incat=4252> (accessed November 21, 2015).
19. For philosophical debates surrounding testimony and Holocaust representations, see e.g. James E. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Zoë Vania Waxman, *Writing the Holocaust: Identity, Testimony, Representation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness*, trans. Jared Stark (New York: Cornell University Press, 2006).
20. For the first and only analysis of Tsam's manuscript, see Boaz Cohen and Beate Müller, "The 1945 Bytom Notebook: Searching for the Lost Voices of Child Holocaust Survivors," in *Freilegungen: Überlebende, Erinnerungen, Transformationen. Jahrbuch des International Tracing Service*, ed. Rebecca Boehling, Susanne Urban, and René Bienert, vol. 2 (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2013), 122–37.
21. Translated by Judy Grossman and Sidney Lightman. We are grateful for the translators' work on the manuscript and for the funding for this undertaking obtained from Western Galilee College and Newcastle University.
22. Emphases in the original. The Styr River begins near Brody, in the Ukrainian oblast of Lviv, then flows into the Rivne Oblast, Volyn Oblast, then into the Belarusian oblast of Brest where it finally flows into the Pripyat.
23. A derogatory East European word for "Jew;" feminine form, *zhidovka*; plural, *zhidi*.
24. In the context of the Final Solution, *Aktion* (or "actions") by German forces denotes operations during which hundreds of thousands were murdered by bullet or gas. Sometimes *Aktionen* targeted a particular segment of the Jewish population, such as the intellectuals, women, children, the elderly, the sick, or simply Jews living in a designated area. At other times, entire communities were wiped out. See Nachman Blumental, "Action," *Yad Vashem Studies* 4 (1960): 57–96.

25. Banderists, or “Banderovtzi,” were members of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), followers of Stepan Bandera, a Ukrainian ultra-nationalist (1909–59). The term was also used as a general name for Ukrainian nationalist groups hostile to Jews.
26. “Bul’bivtzi” in the narrower sense refers to the followers of Taras Bulba-Borovets, who established the Ukrainian Insurgent Army before the Banderovtzi took it over. In Jewish testimonies, however, the term is often used in reference to Ukrainian nationalist partisans in general. John-Paul Himka, “The Ukrainian Insurgent Army and the Holocaust,” paper presented at the 41st National Convention of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, Boston, November 12–15, 2009, https://www.academia.edu/1071581/The_Ukrainian_Insurgent_Army_UPA_and_the_Holocaust (accessed August 30, 2015).
27. “For Our Sins”: a prayer of confession recited in synagogue on the Day of Atonement (the most solemn day in the Jewish calendar), during which one beats one’s breast.
28. Russian for “comrades.” Singular: *tovarishch*.
29. We could not find a translation for this word.
30. Their father’s name.
31. The Ukrainian.
32. Wedel is the oldest chocolate brand in Poland, the business having been established in 1851.
33. The first two lines of “Die Lorelei,” by the German poet Heinrich Heine (1799–1856), a nominal convert from Judaism. The English translation (by A.Z. Foreman), reads, “I know not if there is a reason / Why I am so sad at heart ...” The best-known and most popular musical setting of the poem was composed in 1837 by Friedrich Silcher.
34. The meaning of the Yiddish word *dardareno* is unclear.
35. The date here is incorrect: July 6 or 8, 1941 (and not June) is the date when the town was occupied by the Germans. The Jewish men were massacred on August 10, 1941. Error can be attributed to the witness’s own mix-up or to a transcribing mistake by Tsam.
36. What may have been meant here is “proposals.”
37. The fifth and sixth lines of “Die Lorelei.” A.Z. Foreman’s translation reads, “The air is cool under nightfall. / The calm Rhine courses its way.” See <http://poemsintranslation.blogspot.co.uk/2009/11/heinrich-heine-lorelei-from-german.html> (accessed November 19, 2014).
38. SS-Oberscharführer Heinrich Feiertag served in 1942 at the Lutsk Ghetto, and also in Krasne camp.
39. We think that P—tch regretted having said she was her cousin and (“murderously”) claimed that the girl was not her cousin – laying her open to the murderous allegation that she was a Jew.
40. Also known as Kostopil.
41. Also known as Korzec.
42. Some letters are missing from the text here.
43. Literally, “insult” or “affront.”
44. Lamentations 4:2.
45. Heinrich Graetz (1817–1891), a German-Jewish historian considered to be the founder of modern Jewish historiography.
46. Tsam presumably meant “endless”, “continuous.”
47. It is now known that while the Germans did experiment with making soap out of human bodies this did not go past the trial stage. One such site was found but certainly not “hundreds.” One has to remember that Tsam was writing according to the historical knowledge or truisms of the time.
48. “Work makes life sweet.” Tsam is probably referring to the infamous slogan “Arbeit macht frei” here. “Work makes life sweet” is the first half of a German folk saying, the second half of which reads, “and laziness strengthens the limbs” (“Faulheit stärkt die Glieder”).
49. Tsam refers here to Julius Streicher, who was the editor of the virulent antisemitic Nazi newspaper *Der Stürmer* and one of the defendants in the Nuremberg trials. It is probably because of this that Tsam singles out him and his “statement.”
50. Tsam is presumably referring to villagers or partisans here.
51. This is a literal translation. Something is clearly missing here, but unfortunately we were not able to trace the original.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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